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IN THE KING'S COUNTRY



AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

KD 15469

THE DOUGLAS NOVELS.

THE HEIRS OF BRADLEY HOUSE.
OSBORNE OF ARROCHAR.
A MODERN ADAM AND EVE IN A GARDEN.
THE FORTUNES OF THE FARADAYS.
FOES OF HER HOUSEHOLD.
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STEPHEN DANE.
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BOSTON.**

IN THE KING'S COUNTRY

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

AUTHOR OF "LARRY" "FOES OF HER HOUSEHOLD" "BETHIA WRAY'S NEW
NAME" "IN TRUST" "STEPHEN DANE" "NELLY
KINNARD'S KINGDOM" ETC.

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INSCRIBED

**TO THE MEMORY OF ONE WHO, GOING THROUGH DAILY
LIFE, MADE PLEASANT PATHS IN THE WALKS
OF DUTY, OF LOVE, AND EARNEST
ENDEAVOR,
MY MOTHER.**

A. M. D.

NEWARK, 1894.

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IN THE KING'S COUNTRY

CHAPTER I

"KNOWEST THOU THE LAND WHERE THE CITRON
BLOOMS?"

"THE trouble is to know where to go, it seems to me. I've been almost everywhere. People are about the same the world over. Mountains and lakes and seashores get to look alike. You weary of it," said Sabrina Eastwood.

She sat leaning her elbows on the table and resting her chin on the palms of her hands. Slender, dainty hands, with some elegant rings, one a magnificent fire opal. They were so much a part of the fingers, you might fancy they had grown there. The chin was softly rounded, and finished out the oval of the face in an artistic manner. It would otherwise have been rather severe; not sharp nor arbitrary, but critical and self-contained. There was an abundance of fine, light hair, that in her own dressing was always twisted in a great Greek coil. From the forehead

parting to the coil were several loose waves, the crest of each touched with a silvery light. Just at the edge of the brow were some stray tendrils, a mist-like shadiness, for Miss Eastwood had no regular bang. Her hair was too precious to cut. Her eyes were brown, with sunny lights when she was in good spirits, but deep, sad, and questioning in her perplexed or *ennuied* moods.

"The trouble is," said Stacy Delamater, "to know how to get the money to go with. I've tried almost every plan. They are alike impracticable or useless. I've been all over the field of my resources. I've cudgelled my small wits, and it is the same old story. You weary of it."

Just as Miss Eastwood had finished her sentence, Stacy had dropped into the same attitude, hands and all, copying the half-plaintive tone so closely that the others laughed; and, looking at her, Sabrina laughed also.

Stacy was so utterly dissimilar. She was much shorter, barely five feet, while Sabrina was a daughter of the gods, divinely tall. A plump, round, dumpling sort of a girl, that every one squeezed and hugged on the slightest provocation. Her hair was chestnut, with warm tints; it did occasionally get called red. It was extremely curly. Her bronze lashes curled. Her features were short. Her nose just escaped being

"tip-tilted." Her cherry lips had dimples in the corners. Her chin had a little pink tip that spoiled the contour of her face, but added piquancy. Yet every now and then some one said, "What a pretty girl Stacy Delamater is!" Just now she was such a saucy caricature on Miss Eastwood!

"Where would you go, Stacy?" she asked, when the laughing ended.

"Why, abroad, first of all, and none of your six weeks' flying tours, either! Then there's Niagara, the Lakes and Canada, the Pacific coast and Alaska. The Lessings have asked me to spend a fortnight at Newport. Think of that! Their grandfather actually lives there all the year around. But when you consider gowns and gloves, boots and slippers, laces and ribbons, and short journeys hither and thither—well, it's quite as golden as Carlyle's silence. The Berdans have invited me to Lake George, where they have a summer cottage. You see, I am not altogether left out! I dare say I shall go to Aunt Matt's, where I have been from my youth up. Her hospitable doors stand wide open in summer. You don't need new gowns; you can go bareheaded. I know every tree; I have climbed every rock, waded in every brook, hunted cows in the pasture lots. There is an aggravating sameness. Now, Nan, it is your turn."

Anstice Brade gave a long sigh, and glanced up from the soft maize-colored shawl she was deftly crocheting.

"I have dreams of a beautiful land" — quite as if she were repeating poetry. "I think the orange groves bloom in them, and the night-ingales sing — but," changing her tone, "I dare say I shall go out on Long Island with Ben and his wife, and help keep the babies from being drowned in the sea or lost in the sand or hanged among the wild vines. How children manage to be returned to town all in one piece is a profound mystery to me."

"Now, Pearl, add your mite to this conference meeting, — the enthusiastic dream and the possible realization. If only our dreams and the reality could meet and shake hands once in a while, they might make good neighbors. And to you journeys are possible."

Pearl Disbrowe glanced up at Stacy and Anstice with a light so like a smile, yet it did not often break into that. She was fair and slender too, but there was something nun-like about her; a tenderness in her violet eyes, and in the lines about her mouth.

"I don't exactly know. Somewhere in the King's Country."

"In the King's Country!" repeated Sabrina, in a pretty amaze.

"Oh, you don't know Pearl quite well enough to understand her quips and quirks!" cried Stacy. "That is a — a metaphor — am I right, Nan? I get mixed on those things. And it means" —

Stacy paused, because a little wavering pink was going up Pearl's face.

"Well?" Sabrina glanced inquiringly from one to the other, while the words made a strange refrain in her mind.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," said Pearl Disbrowe, in a tone of quaint simplicity. Her voice was low, and in the first few words you thought it monotonous, but it had a curious quality of representing the thought. And just now "the fulness thereof" touched Sabrina Eastwood with a new and pervasive meaning.

"'The King's Country' is where Pearl always finds some good work to do. She isn't frivolous, like Nan and I, but is always thinking of the lame, the halt, and the blind. She isn't preachy, but she practises. Oh, good gracious, girls!" and Stacy's eyes had roved to the window. "There come Frank Porter and the two Chedister young men. Something is on foot, for even in this benighted region young gentlemen do not indulge in Saturday morning calls for mere pleasure. Nan, run down, while I slip into something more stylish."

Anstice Brade laid down her work and left the room.

"You'll excuse us a few moments," Stacy said, "or will you come down?"

Pearl gave a negative movement of the head and a real smile. Of course Miss Eastwood didn't know the young men. So they were left together in this large up-stairs room. Stacy and Nan were fast friends. They had always lived in Wendover. Miss Disbrowe had been educated here, and boarded with Mrs. Herrick for a while. Miss Eastwood had also been identified with Mrs. Herrick in a curious fashion, and came back now and then to make a visit.

Mrs. Herrick's house had a peculiar quality ascribed to the old-fashioned omnibus, but could be equally applied to the modern street-car,—it always could and did hold one more. Silas Herrick had been an easy, slipshod sort of man, much older than his wife. Why she had married him was a mystery to Wendover. But she had the old place with a considerable debt upon it, and she might naturally have looked for a little assistance. If she was disappointed, she said nothing about it. Silas died, and she buried him. Helen Delamater, a pretty cousin who had made an unfortunate marriage, came there to die and to leave Stacy to the care of Mrs. Herrick and Mrs. Ford,

who were sisters, and with whom she had been brought up. Mrs. Martha Ford lived on a large farm and had a houseful of children; and though she said one more wouldn't count, Mrs. Herrick had a longing for the child herself. But once a year she always made her other aunt a visit.

There was in Wendover a girls' boarding-school, and a collegiate institute for young men and boys. Of late years it had lost prestige, and was now used as a higher-grade school to fit students for college, but it still kept its divinity class. For nine months of the year Wendover presented a rather thriving appearance, but the summers fell flat and dull. It was not country exactly, though it had pretty outskirts. Nothing could make a summer resort of it. There were several factories, some tolerable streets and stores, some small farms hedged in by much larger farms, and then you came to towns again.

Mrs. Herrick had done a little of a good many things, as thrifty, handy women often do to make some money. For three years she had been renting her rooms advantageously to several of the older students and one or two of the professors. It was all clear now. She had repaired and painted it, made her front yard a place of beauty, and her garden raised marvellous berries and early vegetables, the latter by the judicious use

of hotbeds and cold frames. Stacy was like a daughter to her. And all the Wendover girls were fond of dropping in, whether the charm was Stacy or Mrs. Herrick.

Nineteen years before this, a man and his wife and a little girl, their only child, had come to Wendover and boarded with Mrs. Herrick. Manton Eastwood was in a decline, and had been advised to try a high inland town. Neither could have been very young at the time of their marriage. Mr. Eastwood was well on to middle life; Mrs. Eastwood owned to thirty, but was very faded and worn out for that. She had been a belle in her day, and was now fretful and dispirited, complaining continually of having been wronged out of just claims that would give her a fortune.

Mr. Eastwood died rather suddenly, and it was found then there had been great heart weakness, with the consumptive tendency. Mrs. Eastwood took her little girl and went away, but about a year later came back. There had been a lawsuit, and she had lost again.

Mrs. Delamater, meanwhile, had added her sorrows to Mrs. Herrick's care, and was gone on the last journey. Mrs. Eastwood pined and fretted, and little Sabrina waited patiently upon her whims.

"She's like a little old woman!" said Mrs. Her-

rick. "She never runs and plays with any of the neighbor children; she doesn't even go to school, her mother is so afraid she'll make some injudicious acquaintances. She's sure that some time the little girl will be a great heiress. As if she wouldn't go away from Wendover then, and forget everybody she had ever known! That woman is next door to a fool, if I must say so! And it's a shame to keep that little mite cooped up in a room, dinging on that old piano! She's white as a ghost now!"

One day the summons arrived. Mrs. Eastwood and her daughter went away again. A few weeks later word came to Mrs. Herrick to sell the piano and accept the sum of money for her many kindnesses, also the few pictures and small articles of furniture. Mrs. Eastwood was going abroad to educate her daughter. She had at last won her rights.

Somehow Mrs. Herrick could not bring her mind to actual parting with the piano. When she entered the dimly lighted parlor she could almost see the pale little girl perched upon the high stool, wearily going over the dull exercises. She had such a curious sympathy for her! Then she wasn't really compelled to sell it.

Stacy grew up into a large girl under Aunt Jane's fostering care. She went to school; she

made yearly visits to Aunt Matt, whose children matured and married off, except Rachel, the eldest daughter, and David, the youngest son, who was a little older than Stacy. Changes came to Wendover. A large paper factory was built, then a hat factory and a woollen mill. The girls of the town found employment and husbands too. The Misses Brush altered their house on Avon Hill, and, instead of going away to teach, started a fairly profitable seminary. The location was the handsomest in Wendover. Then the old road was widened and straightened, and became Avon Place. The manufacturers came out and built pretentious houses, and so there developed an aristocratic part of town. Spring Street was just off Avon Place, and Stacy grew up under the shadow of the more exalted atmosphere that often wafts from the treetops of some past decades. To be sure, Mrs. Herrick kept boarders, but they were not mill-hands or hatters.

When Stacy said one morning, "O Aunt Jane, there's such a tall, beautiful girl in the parlor to see you! She's elegantly dressed, so she can't be a seminary teacher; and she's too — too stylish for a scholar. I do wonder if she wants to get board!"

Aunt Jane was seeding raisins, in order to sit down with a clear conscience, for she had

been working hard and was tired. Generally such "puttering" things were relegated to Stacy. She washed her hands, smoothed her hair, and put on her yesterday afternoon's white apron.

The tall, beautiful girl rose. Her hand was very slender, encased in a silver-gray kid glove, with broad stitchings down the back, all the rage then.

"Of course you could not remember," she said in a soft, trained voice. "I am Sabrina Eastwood."

"Of all things in this mortal world!" cried Aunt Jane in surprise. She looked her over in a kindly fashion.

"And you were a slim little mite the last time I saw you, — not that you're stout now. And see here, you used to sit on this stool and play on this piano until it seemed to me your back would break and your poor little fingers fall to pieces. Your mother said sell it, but land! I hadn't the heart. It was like a bit of you. And now Stacy, my niece, plays on it. Do you remember the baby? You used to be fond of her."

"Oh, and she's almost grown up! Was it she who came to the door? What a bright, pretty girl —" and Miss Eastwood colored with a curious consciousness that she should have known her as a baby.

"And now tell me about your mother. I no more expected to hear from you or see you than I should have looked for Noah to come and preach another deluge! I'm clear taken aback! But there's something about you, the more I study, a sort of Quakery sweetness you had as a little child" —

Miss Eastwood began with the fact that her mother had lived only five years after they had gone abroad. She had been much worn and worried in the endeavor to recover an estate that belonged in her mother's family. By a lucky turn an important paper had been found which entirely disproved her rival's claim. Sabrina had been placed in a convent school, seeing her mother a few times a year. She had been spending the winter at Florence when she died. Then there had been guardians, and a return to America, and more schools, and a tour abroad, with "seasons" in several foreign cities. She was twenty-three now, and her own mistress. And she wished to know something about her father, to find his grave and have it put in proper order. She had kept a very distinct memory of Mrs. Herrick and her kindness.

"'Twan't any special kindness," protested Mrs. Herrick; "leastways, no more than I'd think it my duty to do. Seems to me people don't earn

praise just doing their duty. You know the Lord said even the publicans could be pleasant-like with their own, — them ain't just the words, — but I take it when you're reasonably well paid for a thing it's no more'n honest to give the full worth of the money. And your pa paid very well for them times; and I was powerful glad to have the chance to make the money. Sometimes it was quite hard squeezin' with me. But now I've got forehanded-like, and leave to draw a good long breath — many as I want to;” and she laughed in a satisfied manner. “Still, it's right pleasant to be remembered, and you was such a little mite of a thing!”

Anybody could have read admiration in Mrs. Herrick's cordial glance. They were presently walking out to the old burying-ground. It was a long strip of land back of the “Orthodox” church, beginning to be more reverently cared for and improved according to modern ideas. In an out-of-the-way corner there was a plain marble slab, moss-grown and awry, with Manton Eastwood's name.

“Poor papa!” she sighed. “Mamma has a beautiful monument in the English burying-ground at Florence. It seems as if they ought not to be so far apart, but it would not be practicable to take him there.”

"No, I should say not," was the common-sense rejoinder.

"But I should like to have this changed and improved, and a new stone put up. I wish you could remember little things about my father. I should like to hear them."

"Why, I dare say some of them will come back to me. When there's no real need of treasurin' up, things are apt to slip out of your mind."

This was what called Miss Eastwood back to Wendover. She engaged board for a fortnight later, selected what the townsfolk thought a pretty expensive stone, and stayed while the place was being cleared and the monument set up. Then she went on for a week or two longer. Pearl Disbrowe was to graduate at the Seminary this summer. Her roommate fell ill, and she came over to Mrs. Herrick's to board. She was an orphan as well, with a very moderate fortune. But it really seemed as if there was no end to Miss Eastwood's money.

Mrs. Herrick was much too self-respecting to have her squander it on Stacy or herself. Stacy was rather abashed by the grandeur of the heiress and the many "citified" ways. Then, Miss Eastwood seemed a young lady and Stacy only a little girl.

The next winter at Christmas there came a

box of gifts. After that an occasional visit. Miss Eastwood spent a winter in Washington, made a tour of the Pacific coast, and now, after a second gay winter, came back to Mrs. Herrick's to recruit a while. For it was such a lovely old place! There were nearly three acres of ground. At the back, half a dozen great chestnut-trees, another source of profit, and a delightful grove. The house was a large, rambling old place, built for two families of the same blood; but the old folks had all died, the younger men gone to the "new countries," as the West was still termed, and it had been Jane Wilson's wedding portion.

There was an old-fashioned dooryard in front, with a straight broad path up to the porch. Such flowers as grew there! Such circles of old-fashioned May pinks! such roses all through June! such carnations later on! and many of the more modern flowers. Then a great old honeysuckle clambered about, and a humming-bird always built her nest in it.

Mrs. Herrick had ventured on one enlargement. At the head of the hall was a sleeping-room that opened into hers. When the new porch roof was put on she had this pushed out, and made it one-third larger. Stacy's bed had been moved into her aunt's room, and the wide door stood always open. There were two front

windows and an end window. On the other side was Miss Eastwood's room. They called it hers, because it was newly furnished with a pretty ash suite that Stacy said looked like her. This middle room was a general sitting-room for the girls. The house was double, and down-stairs the two rooms were rented out to students. The professor had one on the second floor, and Miss Disbrowe when she came. Indeed, this was her truest home. She had two sisters-in-law, and each was jealous if she did not dispose of her favors impartially. They thought she ought to hate Wendover, because she had been there at school, and because it was a stupid place. There had been a little money divided equally when their father died; but Pearl's real fortune had come from a queer old maiden aunt of her mother's, who had given her the name she had not so highly honored herself.

As for the Wendover girls, they adored merry, saucy, fun-loving Stacy, and were always dropping in. Stacy did her Saturday's work on Friday, because that last day of the week had grown into a sort of a holiday.

She was never quite sure that she liked Sabrina Eastwood. All the others were on an equality, for Pearl wasn't "rich enough to hurt," she said; but Miss Eastwood seemed high and fine, with a

princess-like air. Her simplest gowns were elegant ; she could play and sing exquisitely, and she knew about everything. There was a curious, intangible distance, and in her secret heart Stacy resented it.

CHAPTER II

IN THE CROWN OF YOUTH AND HOPE

"In the King's Country." That was what Sabrina Eastwood said fully five minutes later; and five minutes seem a long time when converged on one small focus of four words. Stacy had looked in and given another half-invitation. Pearl wouldn't have made so much difference, but she didn't want Miss Eastwood. It was very nice to think of having Miss Eastwood's thousands, and making a good time with it; but if one had to be fussy and "finicky," and always thinking of etiquette and conventionalities, why — let the money go and keep the good times. Sabrina Eastwood was just as much out of place in Wendover as she, Stacy, would be in Windsor Castle.

"'In the King's Country.' When you think of it, the whole earth 'is the Lord's'; you cannot go out of his country," continued Miss Eastwood.

"Oh, yes, I am afraid we do in the nearer sense," said Pearl, in her soft, cool tones. "We make countries of our own. We abide in them,

and fence others out. We train our roses up so high that no small wayside hand, aching for the smooth, satiny pink, can touch them. The high walls of our gardens condense the fragrance and send it up to the clouds, without blessing any weary souls that may be waiting at the wayside. And if it wasn't possible to make countries for ourselves, would the invitation ever have been given, 'Come unto me'? There comes a time, to many of us, when we do arise and go into the 'King's Country,' and the Lord puts some work in our hands. When I have a little leisure, it seems to me I ought to spend part of it there. I've only settled it this way for myself," added the girl with a deprecating half-smile. "Everybody's life is a little different, and its duties not all alike."

The sun sifted marvellous opalescent and sea-like tints through the spaces of green swaying vines. Now and then some long, slender ray would dart across the room like a living thing. Miss Eastwood was watching them. She rarely did anything with her hands. They lay idly in her lap, as if arranged for some bit of sculpture. If she wanted laces or shawls or fascinators, she thought it a kind of charity to buy them, thereby helping along trade and industry, since there were so many who must earn a living.

But Pearl Disbrowe was always busy. Not in

the aggressive fashion that puts on virtuous airs and makes its neighbors feel as if whirled along by machinery, but delicately, leisurely, as if it were a pastime. Some of her pretty handiwork went for gifts. Sabrina watched the deft fingers; she even let her eyes rove furtively over Pearl. She was a very attractive girl; she could make a decided impression on "society."

"You are looking at it in a religious light. I'm afraid I'm not very religious." Sabrina Eastwood flushed as she uttered this, curiously against her will. In a certain way she had enrolled herself under the banner of religion. A man she admired very much had said something while she was staying at an English country place that had impressed her seriously. It was that a woman's character could never attain to its highest and best without religion. She had been christened in infancy. It was quite in order, therefore, that she should be confirmed. She had experienced rapt moods during fine singing, and been carried along convincingly by impressive reading. She looked about for duties, and subscribed to "Homes," a day nursery, and a fresh-air fund. "Hospital Sunday" found her contribution generous. She experienced an admiring satisfaction when she read the reports of their good work; but she knew in a secret, dissatisfied sort of a

way that she had never been in the "King's Country" at all. She was not even sure that she wanted to go. The little loitering on the outside was as much as the people in her "set" did.

Pearl had smiled wistfully, but made no reply. Sabrina always seemed to her like a beautiful picture, and she enjoyed her infrequent meetings with the girl; but just now she thought of the work she could do if she had a tithe of Miss Eastwood's money.

"I wish you would tell me of some nice things to do," Miss Eastwood said presently, in her most persuasive tone, as if divining the other's mood. There was a curiously uneasy feeling rising to the surface. If Pearl had preached or upbraided ever so gently she could have defended herself; but she had a suspicion that Pearl stood on a higher plane, that she had an unknown security and certainty in what she did.

"I don't know what you would call 'nice things.' Do you mean pleasant ones?"

"Well, doing some good to some one—who needs it, I suppose I ought to add. I did subscribe to my customary charities. I always do that early in the season. They couldn't do anything without money; so it's rather fortunate there should be some helpless people with money."

"Why 'helpless'?"

"Well, you see these people on committees know just what to do. They're not likely to make mistakes. And I have a feeling they would rather not be interfered with. I don't blame them, understand. If I had learned by long experience just how to do any kind of work, I shouldn't like an entirely ignorant person to come and insist that her way was better. I shouldn't know who was deserving. I don't believe I could tell if the women drank, or if the children were frauds. Only it makes you seem outside of it all. And when you get tired of other matters"— She made a long pause, and the brown eyes seemed to shadow over, as if she were really tired and discouraged.

"The doing good to those who need it is not always pleasant work. Yet sometimes there are great pleasures that may be given"—

Pearl thought of Stacy and the little variation to her life,—the delight a journey to some strange place would be to her. Why couldn't Sabrina see that!

Just then there was a stir, a rather heavy step and panting breath, and Aunt Jane came to the door of the room with a letter in her hand.

"For you, Miss Eastwood. Tom Bevans just brought it over."

"Thank you," said Sabrina. "You've tired yourself all out coming up-stairs. Sit and rest a moment."

"No; it was some bits of carpet that I'd been shaking that made my breath so short. Dear, dear! The idea of being tired out with a little thing like that!" and she laughed with a mellow voice.

Sabrina looked idly at her letter. It was from her aunt — not a real aunt, for neither father nor mother had near ties. But the Vantines were cousins, and Mr. Vantine had been appointed her guardian. In fact, after her mother had won her suit, they were her nearest heirs, since Hollis Winchester had been dispossessed.

Mrs. Herrick went puffing down the stairs again, not because she was breathless, but from a habit she had fallen into that she thought rested her. Pearl went on with her crocheting. Sabrina studied the waxen seal, with the fine lettering she could not have deciphered if she had not known what it was. Mrs. Vantine adopted every style that was a little troublesome. She thought a waxen seal indicative of leisure and refinement, and was annoyed when Sabrina omitted it.

The girl cut across the end of the great square envelope of stamped Irish linen. The epistle was crossed, and she hated crossed writing.

"What do you find at Wendover to keep you so long?" was one sentence. Then, after skipping some that were almost illegible, "Have you decided what to do this summer? Your uncle has business out in New Mexico; and, if you can't settle upon any place, he thinks we might as well go along. There will be a certain style to it, but whether it would be comfortable is a question. If you don't mean to marry" — Sabrina skipped nearly a page. "What do you think has happened to Chester House? Mr. Bedford died suddenly of a heart trouble, and there has been a tremendous business collapse. Mrs. Bedford wrote to say she couldn't think of keeping the place, and drops it back on our hands as coolly as you please. Your uncle put it on an agent's books at once, but everybody wants modern appointments, and it's too late to do the house over. If it was a really fashionable resort, but it isn't. And we don't want a regiment of children destroying everything. Your uncle thinks you had better take Winchester's offer for it. It's an old house, in an out-of-the-way place, and no one else will give you as much. It will soon be out of repair, and become a bill of cost. Have you come to any decision? I'm going to the Calcrofts' for ten days. I really think I should like to go with your uncle."

Presently Sabrina perused it more carefully. Perhaps that about the marriage was right. She could not be always young. Mrs. Vantine's two daughters had married exceptionally well before they were twenty. Mr. Richmond Jarvis, a railroad man who was to accompany Mr. Vantine, was another chance. If she went she would tacitly commit herself to his attentions. There was the round of watering-places. She was weary, as she had said. Why couldn't she retire to Chester House? To be sure, Hollis Winchester was in business only a few miles distant. He had asked her to marry him in an almost brusque business fashion, quite as if she owed him some reparation for despoiling him. She had wished more than once that her mother had not been quite so exigent. But that was way back in her childhood, and she had nothing to do with it. The mill property had gone back into his hands. The old Hollis people had been her ancestors. Marriage had brought in the Winchesters. The Bedfords had taken a five years' lease the year before she attained her majority, and she had fallen back upon that, though some subtle emanation from her mother's influence still swayed her. Perhaps it would be a good thing to test her regard for the place. If she should not care to keep it she could take Winchester's offer. She was too young to

be world-weary, but her last five or six years had been so crowded. She liked Wendover because she had time to rest and think ; rather an unsatisfactory process, after all. Were there not some things better than dressing and dancing, and talking trivialities or unfriendly gossip, or considering a man's eligibility? Why did she not have some kind of a mission in the world?

There were sounds of the visitors' departing, little laughs and gay tones, pleading and promising, and the two girls ran up-stairs again.

"It's a rowing party and a picnic down at Bird's Cove," began Stacy, "and the committee have left invitations for all. Frank sent a very urgent request to you, Pearl. We are to start at three, sharp. We'll have our supper at the cove, though we're going to take along the substantials. And there's a young moon, so the coming back will be gorgeous! Moonlight adds a great deal to the beauty of the Watseka, as well as some other things in life. Nan, you can tell the little odds and ends, for I must go and help Aunt Jane get the dinner, and make a pan of biscuits. I've seen hungry people before now."

The last of the sentence was finished in Aunt Jane's room, where she was getting back into her rather *passé* lilac gingham. Then she ran down-stairs humming a snatch of an old song.

Aunt Jane listened and consented. These parties were quite the thing in Wendover during the summer. The best of them took place before the young men went away. The town was dull after that.

Stacy was blithe as a bee. The professor was not home to dinner; he seldom was on Saturday. Stacy and Nan exchanged curious brief glances as the girls responded to the summons. It was to the effect that Nan had not especially invited Miss Eastwood. The girls had decided that she would prove something of a damper to the party. She was too superfine. But since that invitation was left, it must be specially given, and Stacy could rise to emergencies in a graceful manner.

"I know so few of you," said Miss Eastwood. "You are very good to count me in your pleasures, but I think I shall enjoy visiting with Aunt Jane."

"There, auntie, you hear! She prefers you to our blandishments. Now you must dress up in a clean calico and a white apron, and let the garden severely alone while you devote yourself to entertaining."

"Miss Eastwood 'n' I have had good times together before now," said Aunt Jane with her soft laugh. "You needn't worry a mite."

"We can't spare Pearl. All the brave oarsmen

would be broken-hearted and dispirited. They have engaged her." She came and kissed Pearl.

She never felt quite sure how much she liked Miss Eastwood. She envied her and admired her; she copied her in mimicry, and she was a little bit afraid of her. That gave her the sort of bravado. But just now Miss Eastwood longed to be in this crowd of happy girls. What made them all adore Pearl?

Stacy and Nan helped wash the dishes, put up their contribution toward the supper, — delightful biscuit sandwiches, with cold ham and chicken. She also slipped into the basket a small jar of jam. Frank Porter was to call and escort the basket. He said he wouldn't mind heaviness in such a good cause. They went off gayly, hoping Miss Eastwood wouldn't be lonesome.

Aunt Jane came and brought her mending-basket. There were some old tablecloths to be cut into napkins. She still put everything to the best use.

"Pearl Disbrowe is an unusual girl, don't you think so, Aunt Jane?" Many people called Mrs. Herrick "Aunt Jane." "If everybody could make goodness look so lovely" —

"Well — Pearl — she's good all through. There's no streaks to flash out and spoil it. I never see her beat for thinking of other folks. I declare for

it, if I was rich I'd buy a nice big house and settle it on her. She should take in the lame, the halt, and the blind. She's an outside Sister of Charity, but her gray gowns are never ugly. It beats me to see how she manages to find so many nice poor people. She's got two on her mind now, and she's been talkin' to me about taking them and letting her pay their board. There, I don't know's I ought to told that! I've been planning that when all the folks go away I could — but law! I sha'n't let her pay no board for two poor old women. They were great ladies in their young days, it seems, and had no end of money, and their father owned a farm that's Fifth Avenue, New York, to-day. One thing and another happened to them, and they've lost their fortune. All their knowledge is of the old-fashioned sort. They've taught; they've done fine sewing, and lived poorer and poorer, all crowded up — rents are so high in city places. They had some bank stock, and there was some crooked work that broke the bank, and they lost that, and one of 'em has been poorly all the spring. Pearl thinks if they could go somewhere in the country and get recruited up."

"Why, there are societies" — Sabrina hesitated, wondering if she knew of any that would just meet this case.

"Well, yes. I read about 'em. Splendid things they are too; sending out working-girls and clerks, and poor tired women with sick babies. But Pearl's always finding out things that get skipped over. There's highways and hedges; then there's byways. And it's queer how eager the young people are about her, and what good times she has everywhere. She just makes doing good look beautiful, as you said."

"And you think you'll take them—the—the ladies, I mean." Two shabby, bent old women they were in her mind, full of antiquated ways and queernesses.

"Well, I'd'n know. You see, I'd sort of lotted on going to my sister's this summer, up in New Hampshire. I haven't been there in years. It's been one thing and another, and this summer there's nothing to hinder. I'm thinking whether I had better."

The college folks would soon be away. Miss Eastwood studied Aunt Jane with a delicately new interest. She was round and rosy. She had worked hard, but now she was "comfortable." She had taken few real holidays in her life, and she deserved this one. Yet she was considering whether she could give it up. Sabrina wondered if she had ever made a real sacrifice in her life, at least since the fortune had come to her.

"Maybe I'll work it around somehow. Now, don't hint to Pearl that I was talking it over. Not that she made any great secret of it. And I think somehow she'd meant to stay with them. I could go later on. You see, I clean house when all the men folks get away; and there's little odds an' ends, and July goes. Then there's only August."

Mrs. Willing was coming up the path with her old-fashioned workbag on her arm. She was one of the country neighbors, and had come to the time of life when the events of her youth were more entertaining than any modern topic. Sometimes these people interested Sabrina in an artistic sense, but just now she would have liked a good long talk with Aunt Jane. She was so used to having matters very much her own way that she drew her brows into a little frown.

"I declare, if there isn't Marthy Willing! She's come to spend the afternoon, sure as you're alive! An' I most wish she hadn't, when we were settling into such a comfortable time; but I do s'pose I'll like people to be glad to see me when I get nigh to seventy. You come down and sit on the porch, where it's cool and shady, so's you won't be lonesome."

"I think I'll take a short walk," said Sabrina. "Then I'll come back and try the porch. I am never lonesome here at Wendover."

"You ought to have gone off on the frolic."

Sabrina smiled a little. She wondered, for almost the first time, if the gulf between her and the other girls was not of her own making. She almost envied Pearl her power to attract everybody. She fascinated in the world of society, but somehow she never seemed to get down to the heart of things. Was there any real heart?

She walked out to the old burying-ground. How often she mused over her father, with a feeling that life had not been very satisfactory with him. She knew now that her mother could have been fully satisfied and happy with the delights fortune afforded. Why could not she?

Like a refrain, the words came back on the soft wind, the rustle of the leaves, and almost, it seemed, in the slow song of the birds. She had noted how the gay morning carol subsided to a tenderer sweetness as the evening drew on. And now they all seemed saying, in a sort of happy content, "In the King's Country." Did even nature understand, in her mystical stir and softness, the secret she had never known? At what portal did one enter in? "The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there." What brought that back to her mind, where so many beautiful things were stored, that rarely did anybody any good?

She read her letter over again, sitting by her father's grave in an iron chair that was being ivy grown. It was weary almost to fretfulness. Perhaps five years was a good while to try Aunt Vantine's patience. She had disappointed her that first season in London, she remembered, because she had run away from Lord Aylesbury, who was twice her age, — a stout, florid, dogmatic sort of person, who had buried one wife, and was enjoying her money. And then Hollis Winchester —

"I am tired of it all," she said softly, sadly, to herself. "And I have never been in the 'King's Country.' Suppose I were to go. It would be such a new place!"

Some inward grace of Pearl's touched her, just as the other influence had for a while.

CHAPTER III

A SPRIG OF HEART'S-EASE

THE tea-table was spread temptingly as Sabrina entered. Mrs. Herrick had taken out the old-fashioned china, with deep blue coloring that seemed to have melted and floated irregularly around the edges of the leaves and flowers. They were picked out with gilt, and some had veining in delicate gold tracery. The cups were low and wide, the saucers flat, the sugar bowl with a swelling body, the cream jug with a queer, broad spout. Sabrina knew that they were more than a hundred years old. It was very good in Mrs. Herrick to get them out for Mrs. Willing to enjoy. Aunt Vantine would have had them safely stowed away in a cabinet, labelled as to age and circumstances.

The ladies had talked their old life almost to shreds. Sabrina seldom troubled herself to entertain people she cared nothing about ; but she had seen so much, and when some allusion was made concerning the queen, Miss Eastwood told

them how she had been presented at a "drawing-room."

"You don't mean to say you actually kissed the queen's hand!" Mrs. Willing took off her glasses and rubbed them, and looked again at Miss Eastwood. "We don't hold any great to queens, but Queen Victory's been uncommon, — a good woman, a good wife and mother; and what I like is her being fond of her grandchildren, and her being so friendly with the old people up there in Scotland where she goes. And to think you've actually seen her! And now tell us about the other grand people."

Sabrina was very entertaining. Why not? She and the girls in her "set" had talked these things over many a time. Had she not occasionally done it in a mood that stirs up envy, without deliberately setting about it? She did not remember that she had ever tried it for the pure pleasure before. It gave her a strange softness of feeling as she saw the old lady's eyes brighten and pink tints come and go in her wrinkled cheeks.

There was the little "fuss" about going away. Mrs. Willing came and shook hands with her. "It's been as good as goin' myself," she said, with a tremble in her voice. "You can read such things; but when some one tells you how everybody looked, and just what they did, you can

kinder see everything with a second sight. It's as much as a good many of us'll get in this world; and you've a great gift, makin' things appear so plain. Why, I almost feel as if I had been over there to London! My dear, I want to thank you for the nice time I've had. There's a great talk about society and money spoilin' people, but it can't spoil 'em much if it leaves 'em free to bring out some of their best things for two plain country women gettin' along in life. You're givin' as you've received."

Sabrina sat down on the step of the porch as Mrs. Herrick walked to the gate with her friend. Her soft, light silk, where the delicate flowers looked as if they were growing over it, floated up around her, and the shady end, with its clustering vines, made a background. The moon was coming up; the sky was a perfect sea of unclouded blue, with the stars farther off and fainter. "All the wealth of early June, so suggestive of summer, lay warm and soft about. There was no whirr of insects; the quiet seemed to hold in its depths a reverent tenderness. How beautiful the world was! Something new and penetrating came to Sabrina Eastwood. "The earth and the fulness thereof" was the Lord's. Had any one a real right to shut up his own part of it, and just let in certain people who were surfeited

with what they had already, who were continually devising methods of creating new wants and new pleasures?

Pearl Disbrowe wasn't troubled with such irritating questions. There were her two old ladies—if Sabrina should live fifty years—it looked a long while, to be sure, but people did—she would be seventy-three. What if she were poor and homeless, or trying to eke out a scanty living while she could, to keep herself from the last charity, an Old Ladies' Home? How queer it would be! She was a subscriber to one, but she had taken no further interest in it. She did these things because they were a respectable fashion. They gave one reputation, perhaps a feeling of doing one's duty and getting it off one's mind, so you could go at the pleasures.

She saw herself being whirled along in palace cars, stopping at the large hotels,—Aunt Vantine always chose that kind,—meeting some of the big railroad men Mr. Vantine had business with. To be sure, there were the curious old cities and the intensely new ones; but she had taken one rather exhaustive Western tour. There would be no end of small fault-finding and dissatisfaction. Aunt Vantine seemed to consider this as something due her position,—one of the prerogatives of wealth and social standing. Sabrina wondered

why it was so reprehensible for poor people to find fault! Was there some inherent grace of contentment allied with the straits of poverty? Writers and speakers and "society" were always condemning the unsatisfied desires of the poor. Wasn't it reasonable that they should enjoy some pleasures besides the regulation outings?

There was the lovely old house in the sleepy town not far from the shore edge of Connecticut. An artist acquaintance of hers had sent her several sketches of the place, and she had been there twice. The Bedfords had hired it furnished for five successive summers. It was two miles back from the Sound. Fashion had not set her sign royal upon it. In fact, there was a rather dismal little fishing settlement on the shore edge, and the people around were still primitive. But there were seventy acres of ground, a winding creek going across one corner, the spur of a farther-off river, and a clump of trees, a bit of the woods lying beyond. It was a great roomy, old-fashioned house, with few modern adornments. She wondered now why she had not let Winchester take it; only, just then he had a mind to swallow up her and everything belonging to her, and she had protested. The old Winchesters who had christened the house

were relatives of his and had lived there nearly a century.

Winchester's father and her mother had all this bitter fight. Once there had almost been a compromise, the case was so nearly proven, and the right evidently was with Mrs. Eastwood. Winchester had been obstinate and rapacious to the last degree, and would entertain no such idea. Then the important paper had been unearthed, and Mrs. Eastwood came off triumphant. There was Chester House and Winchester Mills, a great flourishing establishment, and blocks of tenement houses that sheltered the hands. Of course it brought Mr. Winchester nearly to the verge of ruin, and a man with less pluck must have thrown up everything. He hired the Mills and went on, though it ground his spirit into the dust to do this. He was a hard master, and made money. The ambition of his life was to buy back the Mills. He died after a brief illness, hating to go before he had achieved his purpose, and leaving it to his son. And so when Miss Eastwood came of age Hollis Winchester made his proffer for the Mills. That and the tenement houses were sold, the latter to promiscuous buyers, and the money profitably reinvested.

Winchester met Miss Eastwood quite by accident, and resolved to win back the fortune. He

was a fine-looking, resolute man of thirty, and had taken more than a dozen years of solid work and close attention to business in his endeavor to retrieve his father's mishap. "Never rest until you get it all back," his father had said with his dying breath. The tenement rows he cared nothing for—they had long since seen their best days; but he did want Chester House, and he fancied he wanted Sabrina Eastwood. But he had angered her, and she had refused to dispose of the property. She had a curious fancy about the old homestead. She would like to go there and have one quiet summer after her five years of junketing round. If she dared offer the house to Pearl,—if Pearl could gather some of her needy folks, and make a "King's Country" of her very own, she would go and take a maid, and board; and if she tired of it there were other places and other friends. For once she would like to try something quite new,—a life where Aunt Vantine was not. There were the proprieties. To be sure, a handful of girls could run over Europe by themselves, or go to the White Mountains, or the Yosemite Valley, and no doubt Pearl could find some one who would be glad to come for dignity's sake.

Mrs. Herrick had walked slowly back, and, seeing the girl preoccupied, gone through to the

kitchen for some last odds and ends housekeepers always find to do, especially on Saturday night. Then she bethought herself that the young people would come home hungry, and arranged the table for them. When she went out again, Sabrina still sat there quietly. The moonlight was coming up nearer, and it made her look like a beautiful bit of sculpture. There was a strange yearning in her face, as of one lost amid the deep things of life.

Was she happy? the elder woman wondered. It was strange, indeed, for some people to have so much that they hardly know what to do with it or themselves, and others so little. Maybe the Lord knew best; but was it really the Lord's doings? She was not at all clear on this point. It seemed to her that a good many things were laid to the Lord, when he had trusted other people to do his work, and they had said, "I go, but went not."

Sabrina felt the presence there. She stretched out her hand. Mrs. Herrick took a seat on the step beside her.

"You ought to have gone off with the young people," she said kindly. "It's lonesome-like, here alone."

"I'm not lonesome, Mrs. Herrick. I have been enjoying a strange, questioning kind of a time by myself. I spend a good many days thinking what I shall wear, and how it will be made, and where

I shall go, and all that. For a month I've been quite perplexed. And this morning Miss Disbrowe mentioned a place I had never been, and I've about half concluded I would like to go there, with her" —

Mrs. Herrick gave a soft laugh. "Oh," she said, "it will be some quiet, out-of-the-way place;" and, pausing abruptly, she studied the fair girl. Was there something mysterious about her?

"It oughtn't to be out of the way," replied Sabrina; "and yet I had never heard of it before, — the King's Country."

"Oh!" and there was a certain reverent inflection. "Well — I guess Pearl's there a good part of the time. It's out of the way with most of us, but she seems to find it natural enough. Yes, that's like Pearl. She'd make it with her two old ladies."

"I wonder if she would let me come and stay a while in it? I couldn't make one myself; but I have a large, lovely old house in a country place, that is likely to stand vacant. If you could coax her to take it, — to come and live in it, I mean, with just the people she wanted to — to make happy. And you won't need to buy it." Sabrina reached over and took the plump hand, not as soft and delicate as hers, but one that had been much more useful. "All you need do is to persuade

her to go and take possession. I'd like to be there, and see how she managed. I'd promise not to make any trouble. You see, if I went off somewhere, I should spend a good deal of money. And if I did it here — dear Mrs. Herrick, couldn't you put it so it would seem real attractive to her? There might be other old ladies. There might be young ones."

Sabrina Eastwood's voice had a peculiar eager tremble in it. When she was only a little dot, she used to say, "Dear Mrs. Herrick, don't mind mamma's bad headache. It will all be right to-morrow." Did she guess that it was really all fretfulness? A beseeching sound like those old times touched the elder woman.

"Well, well!" she ejaculated. "If I'd been praying with all my might and main, it would a-seemed as if the Lord had sent the answer right along. I don't know's I hardly wished it even; only I thought sometimes that Pearl would do a powerful sight of good with money, if so be she could marry a rich man who had the same mind — but, land! such things don't often come to pass. And now tell me about the house, and what you'd like to have done."

"I don't know myself," Sabrina said, with the sort of half-smile in her voice that one could feel. "There's the house and grounds. And here is a

girl with more money than she needs, who is tired of thinking of self all the time. And there's ever so many things. If it was just a simple chemical experiment of two quantities and a resolvent" —

"Did you get all that out of what I said when I wished I was rich enough to buy Pearl a house? Or did you think I was sort of hinting round" — and the honest face flushed so that Sabrina saw it in the silvery light.

"No," returned Sabrina frankly. "Mrs. Vantine wrote about the tenant giving up the house. It was the letter you brought me this morning. The lady's husband has died suddenly, and there's some business trouble. Then, Mrs. Vantine would like to go out to New Mexico with her husband. She will stay and matronize me if I want to go to any summer resort, or a dozen of them, which she would like better. She is fond of changing about. Or I could go with them. But I would like something different."

"I don't see how you rich people can keep forever going about. It would tire me to death," said the honest countrywoman.

"I think it tires us a good deal, and tries our tempers," replied Miss Eastwood. "I like to come here because it's so restful. Fashionable life keeps you on the march all the time, and you don't seem to have much real satisfaction in the

end. So, if, between us both, we could persuade Miss Disbrowe to come to Chester House and make a little bit of the King's Country there" —

The soft, sweet air went wandering by, freighted with dewy fragrance. The moon went on climbing up among the stars, and the young girl's soul was stirred as it had never been before. Even in that unusual talk, that was so strange in a fashionable drawing-room — why should it come back to her now, and seem curiously pieced on, as if the life between had nothing to do with it?

Another sound fell on the stillness. Glad young voices, low, soft laughs, toned and mellowed by the distance, yet coming nearer. Then the patter of steps, and the shadowy group became more clearly defined. They paused at the gate; some said good by, and went on. Three cavaliers came in.

"It was so delightful!" Pearl paused, and glanced down at Miss Eastwood. Or were the eyes turned up to her with a subtle entreaty? "You would have enjoyed it so! This evening the river was like Jean Ingelow's 'silver ribbon.' And just before that, in the sunset, with the birds trilling their homeward songs, I thought of you."

"Were we *en rapport*? For I have been thinking of you, talking about you. I hope you will not consider me officious when you hear" —

"Yes," cried Stacy, in answer to something

else. "Come in and have some solid comfort. You must all be famished. Aunt Jane's supper will be just splendid."

Pearl lingered, as if waiting for Sabrina to join her. The young girl rose, and they walked out together. How glad and happy they were! What bits of fun they still tossed to each other, though now and then a glance was furtively cast over at Miss Eastwood. They were all so at home with Pearl, — the young fellows appealed to her; the girls claimed her favor; and she seemed in the midst of everything, a centre that radiated ways of pleasantness in every direction. She looked so beautiful just now that Sabrina inwardly protested about the waste of her bright loveliness, when it could win her so much attention and admiration. Was it wasted here? Was not this fresh, eager, whole-hearted preference a thousand times sweeter than the carping, critical, languid, or envious commendation of the world? Should she wish Pearl a draught of the hollow adulation that had so wearied her?

"I am completely saturated with worldliness myself," she thought, with a pang of condemnation; "and the sweetest thing in Pearl is her unworldliness."

Shortly after ten the lights were out and the house was still, — a reverent sort of stillness that

touched Sabrina with the largeness and sacredness of life. The moon had gone back of the great buttonball tree, and all the shadows were lengthening; the stars had come out again in the eastern skies. On the other side, what? At the end of life, what? But must not the doing be here and now? Had she not been gathering the shadows and essences of religion in a fragrant service, leaving the real work for others? A verse of the Psalter came to her, "No man may make agreement for his brother. It costs more to redeem their souls, so he must let that alone forever." She must answer for herself. She must bring in her own sheaves. Where much was given, much was to be required. It was as if for the first time she was face to face with the greater realities.

She went to church with Aunt Jane the following morning. Pearl and Stacy walked together. It was a very plain sermon; and its text was, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." There was no question, then, about loitering. She had found something to do.

Early Monday morning she wrote to the agent that she would keep Chester House, and there need be no further anxiety concerning it. Then, with Aunt Jane's help, she laid her plans before Miss Disbrowe, and they talked it over.

"You'd want a good, trusty woman to shoulder the working end," said Aunt Jane; "and there's Desire White. Only last night she stopped at the gate, and wondered a little what she'd find to do this summer. She'd be just the one to manage; and if your house filled up, others would come to hand. They generally do, I notice."

Pearl sat quite disconcerted. Miss Eastwood's life had been so different.

"I only want to be there and see," pleaded Sabrina. "I'd like to feel that I had been really useful for once. If I have had any talent, I am afraid I have wrapped it up in a napkin, and I would like to learn how to use it. Is it forbidden that you should take a helper with you in the King's Country?"

It could not be settled in a minute; but toward the last of the week Sabrina wrote to Mrs. Vantine that she was going to stay at Wendover a while, and then spend the summer with a friend whom she had persuaded to take Chester House. She wanted a quiet, restful time. She was tired of jaunting about. There was a rather ironical reply to this, and a suggestion that brought the scarlet to Miss Eastwood's fair face. She had not taken Hollis Winchester into account.

CHAPTER IV

AS THROUGH A GLASS BY CONSCIENCE HELD

At thirty, Hollis Winchester had gone far toward the mark set for himself, a kind of offering to his father's memory. There were arrears to be made up when Mrs. Eastwood won her suit. There was the mill to buy. He had kept the aims steadily before him. He was clear of encumbrances, and had begun to pile up money.

After his father's death he had gone to board with Mrs. Kent. She lived a little out of the dust and confusion, on an old-fashioned, quiet street. There was a comfortable old house and a garden. He took her two best rooms, and paid her well for them. By degrees they had attained to a certain luxury. There were capacious stuffed arm-chairs; there were others of willow and rattan, and one reclining-chair that could be adapted to any purpose. The rooms took the western side of the house, and in summer were shaded by a great sycamore. There were generally two other boarders. There was a Mr. Muir, the book-keeper

of the sewing-silk mill, a widower of long standing, whose two daughters had married, and gone to distant cities. And thither one day came Parké Olmstead, the new clergyman. The Misses Blakeney had taken him in with genteel protest. They had the half-century-old adoration of clergymen, and the mannerisms of past decades. They filled his room full of flummery. There were double curtains to his windows, the inner drapery muslin ones tied back with blue bows. The mantel was full of ornaments. He felt his breath constrict whenever he entered it. Then there was a pretty, sentimental niece, who wrote verses, and had achieved a Sunday-school volume.

When Olmstead stepped into Mrs. Kent's large, light room, with its three windows, curtained only by buff shades, its rather spare, plain furniture, his heart warmed to it at once. There was a wide newly whitewashed fireplace, suggestive of winter comfort. There was also a large closet in which he could hide away his trunk and any unsightly belongings. So he made his bargain on the spot. This was Thursday. On Saturday morning he would move in.

Mrs. Kent said that evening, "The new clergyman, Mr. Olmstead, is coming here to board, Mr. Winchester. I hope you won't — mind." That was not quite the word she meant to use.

"No. Why should I?" Winchester frowned unconsciously; then raised his brows a trifle. "Unless he has the bad taste to preach at meals," he appended.

"He doesn't look preachy. I was going to say he doesn't look like a minister, but that would be no compliment, nor the truth. He does, every inch of him. He is as tall as you, fine-looking, with the bluest eyes you can imagine, and a bit of color in his cheeks. About your age too."

Winchester nodded indifferently.

"I do wonder how they will get along!" Mrs. Kent said to Calista Spence, a second or third cousin, who helped in the housework, a smart, thrifty maiden of past forty. "I never thought—I was so taken with him. I believe it was his voice. It was just like the air and sunshine that I let in yesterday,—the first that had a real spring feel in it. Spring's late this year. We don't have any more early springs." Then she sighed, but not about the weather.

"I do hope they'll get on well together. Of course I had the room to let, and I don't think a cat could live in comfort at Marietta Blakeney's, let alone a minister. She and her sister are too finicky for anything. Hollis Winchester minds his own business close enough to get rich at it, I'm sure, as he is doing. And I just never thought a

word about the minister part until 'twas all settled ; but I feel kind of motherly toward Hollis, seeing as he has no one."

"Don't begin to cross bridges till you come to 'em," said Calista. "Just let 'em alone. Two men get along better'n women most times. There ain't never no jealousy of each other's good looks, I notice."

Saturday morning, in a cold, drizzling rain that would have done credit to February, Mr. Olmstead moved in. There was a big trunk, a big valise, sundry satchels, a sort of desk table, and book boxes that he set up for cases. On the top of them he placed a little choice bric-a-brac. There were several pictures, a portfolio of fine engravings, and his study chair. When it was finished, the home appearance gave him a sense of gratification.

Winchester had gone down to New York. They did not see each other until Sunday evening at supper. They let each other alone in a friendly, manly fashion. Mr. Olmstead had heard various comments about Winchester, but he did not feel called upon to throw down the glove in defiance. He had great respect for the apostolic injunction, "As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

As the pleasant evenings came on they smoked

on the porch and exchanged ideas on various subjects, coming to a friendly comprehension of each other. Fortunately their political affiliations were the same. When they trenched on religious matters, Olmstead gave no uncertain sound.

Winchester opened the door of his "den," as he called the sitting-room, and invited the other in. That was the last barrier. And this was the case one soft, rainy, rather close June evening.

"Yes, thank you," returned Olmstead, putting away some papers, and walking through. The Turkish couch, with its cool linen cover, extended him an invitation. "I have something to ask you. Do you happen to know of a Chester House? It is in a small village called Greenfields. You have spent all your life about here" —

"Chester House! What have you to do with the place?" his hearer asked abruptly.

"Nothing with the place. Something with its inmates. Is it a summer home?"

He was quite used to Winchester's brusque moods by this time.

"Well, I hope not. That's one of the modern fads, though, — inviting your friends first, to have a good time; then, when you move on to fresh fields, entertaining the *élite* of the slums. Are you going to send out a cargo of sick babies?"

"Well, I haven't been asked to yet. But there

are two elderly ladies, invalids, I believe, to whom I am to be the bearer of good news. I suppose it is good news when one pays up an old, outlawed debt, and when some money comes to place you above the necessity of struggling for bread."

"It is a sacrilege to turn it into an Old Women's Hospital!" Winchester flung out angrily.

"Has the place any special interest for you?" asked Olmstead in a dignified manner.

"Interest!" Winchester roused himself in a severely upright position. "It was my father's house and mine. I was born there! I'm not a sentimental man — hard-headed and hard-hearted you no doubt think me by this time; but there is not a room in that old house, a tree, nor a stone, that isn't dear to me! My father's uncle held it, and, having no children of his own, adopted my father. There was a great tract of ground here, and the nucleus of a mill. My father added to it, and built rows of houses for his workmen. He had a good, sharp business-head. Over there, at Chester House, my mother came as a bride. Great-uncle loved her as a daughter. I can remember her there, — a small, sweet woman, with fair face and a soft voice. She had such a pretty garden! — great borders of May pinks that kept all the air fragrant, and later such gorgeous

carnations, — white, pink, and soft-colored reds such as we seldom see now. There were beds of lavender, thyme, and sweet herbs. And such roses !”

There was a long silence. Winchester was staring into vacancy.

“ You interest me wonderfully,” said the other in a gentle tone. “ And then ” —

“ She died. Then the old uncle died. He had willed everything to my father. Some other people started up with the claim that he had only a life-right, and could not will it away. My father fought it, and beat them. Then they tried it again, and were beaten. After a while they made a third attempt, with a batch of papers they had found, which my father always insisted were forged. Well, they won, — this girl's mother. They were going to make a clean sweep of everything. The woman had no soul, no conscience ! Father bought in the mill site. All the property here was sold. Then there were some awfully tight times. The woman died, and father made an offer for Chester House, but it could not be sold till this girl came of age. That was two and a half years ago. He had gone over to the great majority then, but I made my essay, and — was refused, of course,” with a contemptuous bitterness. “ They have never lived there.

The place has been rented out, the farm to one party, the house to another. Some very nice people have had it, living there about nine months of the year. The man died early this season, and the last I heard the real owner was to try it. But she's one of the high lights of fashion, and charity is fashionable nowadays."

Olmstead had never been so interested in his fellow-boarder. There was a depth of sentiment to him that had lain unsuspected. He was curiously excited about the present owner. .

"There are worse undertakings than charity, though I am beginning to feel that some of them are ill-judged. But perhaps this young woman may have some kind of regard that you do not understand."

"Nonsense! Why, this girl's mother had never been inside the house! She had no doubt indoctrinated her daughter with a tremendous hatred of our branch of the family. There is nothing to do now but to wait and tire her out, or to snap up the place through a third party. In some cases I could exercise untiring patience. But if she should donate it to a society — you see, she's had a sharp, shrewd, speculating sort of guardian, who has turned her money over and over for her. I was surprised myself when I found out how much she had. Good heavens! Well, you see

now why I am interested, and why I keep a sharp look-out. I wonder if you will find it on your conscience to warn her?"

The tone stirred an instant flash of resentment. Calming himself by a strong effort, he made answer quietly : —

"When you have known me longer, you may be able to judge me more correctly."

"I beg your pardon, Olmstead ; I do sincerely. This business stirs up all the bad blood in me. And I think you had a story I interrupted. You are to carry the tidings of good fortune to two old ladies. Well, I hope you will make them very happy. And allow me also to hope they will prove worthy."

"The great point of interest to me was the other side of the matter."

"Isn't the money come honestly by? We have so many queer questions of ethics nowadays."

Olmstead was silent. Winchester's careless words had started another problem in his thoughts.

"Well?"

"It is a matter of restitution. It might not interest you. I do not want to bore you."

"Nonsense, my good fellow! I didn't hesitate to bore you with this feud of the rival houses.

And some day I may have a similar question to decide. Restitution ! So the other party had defrauded, or thought he had."

He piqued Olmstead by the inflection of doubt in his tone.

"He had. He had been rather an unscrupulous business man, keeping within the letter of the law perhaps. I don't know about his life. At one time, twenty years or so before, he took money of various people to invest. He had known of these two women, and persuaded them to intrust a part of their small means to his manipulations. For a while all went on well. Then came a financial crisis, and every one had to take his share of the loss."

"That was right enough," declared Winchester fiercely. "Doesn't everybody know" —

"They take a man's word," said Olmstead quietly. "The older generation of women had, I think, a greater respect for it. And if those who trusted this man suffered, his wife did not. He went on living in her house and spending her money. By and by, when he had freed himself from legal difficulties, he went at money-making again, and succeeded. He had a son, a fine young fellow, who died after a brief illness. His wife died. Then — he was past seventy at this time — he was called upon to face a stealthy, incurable

disease. He planned to give his fortune to some charity, to be handed down to posterity as a man who loved his fellow-men. He had begun to consider himself quite in the light of a philanthropist."

"Yes," said Winchester in the pause.

"I won't trouble you with the processes by which he came to see that restitution was a more honest thing than philanthropy. There were a good many people whom he had wronged ; there is no intermediate word for it. He made amends. Two of these cases were left to me. One I found quite easily, the other I have been following by a slender clew, missing here and there ; and at last the parties have been traced. A fortnight ago they were taken to Chester House. It devolves on me now to hunt them up and have them bring forward their proofs. So that is my errand to Chester House,—to find a Miss Barclay and a Mrs. Duane, and to restore their own to them."

"Quite a romance," said Winchester.

"I started to ask for directions. I have only a vague idea of Greenfields. My drives have not been in that direction, and my walks mostly about Brentford."

"It lies north-easterly, five or six miles. Greenfields is a sort of farming village that has hardly changed since my childhood. There's an old mill

on the spur of the river. You take the road above it, half a mile or so. There is only one house between. If you like to ride out on Brown Bess, you would enjoy it wonderfully."

"Thanks."

Then Winchester lighted his lamp and began to read his paper. Olmstead's mind reverted to this episode, met in his last winter's work in New York. All that long life of threescore and ten had been devoted to money-getting. Here was a superior young life taking up the same aim, to the exclusion of all else.

The soft summer darkness fell around. How quiet, fragrant, and peaceful it was out here! Olmstead, who was no ascetic, wondered now and then what of the ills of life he should share with his brethren, as far-reaching, conscientious souls often do.

He mounted brown Bess the next morning, and had a delightful gallop through country roads, sometimes narrowing almost to lanes. The undulating fields and broad meadows, broken here and there by a belt of timber in stately growth, made a series of beautiful, tranquil pictures. Here was the old ruined mill, the stream almost choked up with alders, willows, and clumps of wild bloom. From here, there was a decided ascent. He passed a small, low farmhouse, immaculate in white paint ;

he came to the row of giant elms, with their long, drooping, fringy arms. He turned into the driveway; there was no gate. The hard path took a slight curve, and deflected at the side of the house, — a large, low story and a half house, with a gradually sloping roof that, after the small windows, seemed to continue itself in the wide porch roof. The thin turf all around hardly had leave to grow, the great tree-roots depriving it of sustenance. Yet they were far enough apart to let in the sunshine, though they crowded out the smaller shrubbery. At one corner stood a spreading syringa, at the other a tangle of vines and clustering roses still in bloom. The broad porch, raised only two steps, was in full view as you took the turn. There was a hammock across each end; there were willow and splint lounging-chairs. The hall door stood hospitably open, a wide space losing itself at last in a mass of shady greenery.

Two persons sat on the porch. The one in the high-back chair startled Olmstead by her pallor and the utter physical attenuation. Even the hand she raised seemed transparent. The waves of soft white hair, the draping folds of a white shawl wound about her, served to intensify the impression. It had a refined delicacy; even the worn and wrinkled face still held traces of high-bred comeliness.

The younger woman, sitting farther at the end,

rose and took a step forward as he sprang off the horse. There was a strong likeness between them, and by some subtle intuition he knew these were the two he had come to find.

"Miss Disbrowe will be back in a few moments," she said in a low, refined tone, with an old-fashioned accent of formalism. "Will you be seated, and shall I call her at once?"

"No, do not summon her. My errand is not so much with her. I came to find a Miss Barclay, and her sister, Mrs. Duane" —

"I am Mrs. Duane, and this is my sister."

When Miss Barclay attempted to speak, she was interrupted by a spasm of coughing, which she tried to repress as one does after long experience. There was ten or a dozen years' difference in their ages; indeed, Mrs. Duane was the youngest of quite a large family.

"I am Mr. Olmstead, a clergyman from Brentford. Last winter I was in New York. I came to know a Mr. Howland there, who died three months ago. Some years before, you had business — money transactions with him."

The sisters glanced at each other with terrified eyes.

"He came to see many things in a truer light, and made restitution for wrongs that he repented of. This is one instance. The executors have

been endeavoring to find you. We learned that you made a change in May, then all trace was lost for a while."

"Yes," Mrs. Duane said. "Restitution. You do not mean" — there was a kind of incredulous sob in her voice.

"I mean that the original sum, with accrued interest, is awaiting your pleasure."

"O Margaret! Thank God it has not come too late!" She bowed her head over her sister, and took the frail hands in hers. Olmstead was touched by the strong, quiet depths of emotion.

"Pardon us," Mrs. Duane said, as she raised her head, the tears still dimming her eyes. "You are young, strong, and full of hope. You cannot understand what it is to have all your dependence swept away by slow, cruel strokes; to come to the last of life and tread a dreary way whose only outlook seems the charity of some institution. All winter my sister has been ill. We were compelled to give up the room, where we had a few comforts, and hide away, as the poor often do. Then an angel came to us, and lifted us out of the noisome depths, and set us in a high place, brought us to the very gates of heaven. Is there any good thing left? Is the Lord restoring tenfold — giving 'beauty for ashes'?"

She covered her face with her hands, as her

voice died away. He thought he had never seen a more pathetic picture. The traces of deprivation were evident in every line, in every feature the hard, grinding struggle with poverty. He had often pitied the little children—did any one ever give that intense sympathy to old age, needing it tenfold more?

"That we should have it in our power to reward our dear Miss Disbrowe, thank God!" said Miss Barclay tremulously. "Not that she would want any return, but it may assist her in rescuing other suffering souls. Call her, Esther."

She was coming through the hall. She made a slight pause, but Mrs. Duane stretched out her hand.

"Come," she said gently. "Come and hear the tidings the Lord has sent. I am glad now it did not reach us sooner. We should never have known you in that case. And it is worth all the suffering to find such an angel of deliverance."

She presented Olmstead to her. The delicate manner of doing it touched him.

"Now," she rejoined, "tell us our good news over again. We have been out of the world so long that we may need younger and fresher knowledge. But"—with a sudden terror—"the note is outlawed."

"Right and justice are never outlawed," re-

sponded Parke Olmstead. Then he resumed his seat and went over the story in a brief, explicit fashion, stating that it would be necessary for one of the ladies to go to New York with him, and take the papers to prove her claim. The money was there awaiting her. Could she go to-morrow?

She looked uncertainly at Miss Disbrowe. He wondered a little; but his hesitation was settled by the young girl glancing across to him smilingly.

"Would you like me to go with you?" she asked. An expression of intense relief lighted up Mrs. Duane's face, as her grateful smile answered. The arrangements were made accordingly.

"I cannot attempt to thank you," the poor woman said, with a great effort to steady her voice. Olmstead bowed and smiled.

CHAPTER V

IN WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS

"WHAT a lovely old place!" Parke Olmstead said. And this girl, he thought, was its owner. What a curious impression Winchester must have taken of her!

"You may like to have a more extended view," Miss Disbrowe suggested, stepping out on the path. He followed her, though brown Bess whinnied softly, indicating her wish, round the path to the south, past the two long rooms, coming to a sort of hollow square flanked by a long ell, in which was another wide porch, — so wide, indeed, so well roofed, that it suggested delightful teas in the waning light of day. There was a tall, gnarled old pear-tree that stood sentinel. The square was divided into flower-beds with box borders, some of them thin and ragged. Here was the garden of carnations and sweet herbs. There were still some old-fashioned flowers, and clumps of modern geraniums that looked out of place in their staring brightness.

"You have grown very fond of the place, and I do not wonder," he said, with an impulse of conviction. She was so different from his preconceived idea of her. "Yet I wonder if one—if you could be content with a lifetime of it?"

She glanced up questioningly.

"It is quaint and leisurely aspected," he went on. "You could sit here with plenty of time for the long, elegant sentences of Addison, and Miss Burney's novels. Your friends might have stepped out of them."

"I have not gone farther back than De Quincey and Carlyle and Scott," she returned, a little puzzled. "The modern scurrying novel, with its tense life, would be out of place here," and Pearl glanced slowly around. "I wonder if it is any truer?"

"Nearer like the life of the cities, no doubt. But do we need to intensify the tragic side, and live it over in our stories? When one is in the thick of the fray it is the rest and peace farther on that holds out the greatest satisfaction. And perhaps it is so when one comes from the whirl of fashion?"

She did not understand the half inquiry, nor feel inclined to talk about herself. "I wonder if you can realize the joy, the comfort and peace, you have brought this morning," she began again with grave sweetness. "Not that these poor souls

would have been allowed to suffer again. But it is very hard to have had sufficient means, and have it wrested from you by the wrong-doing of others. For so many losses come through that. These women have been heroic in their industry, in their economies and self-denials. They have had a loss here, a loss there, and you can see they are not the kind to battle with untoward circumstances. They were tenderly reared, educated in the accomplishments of their day. Their first misfortune was a dishonest executor of their father's estate."

"You have known them a long while?"

"No ; only since last winter. And I am afraid for Miss Barclay even this will come too late. She took a cold, and was very ill when I found her. And when people are in a state of semi-starvation — oh, why could not this man have repented a year sooner ! Do you know, I sometimes grudge the full penny at the eleventh hour !"

"We all think one of the noblest lines in the immortal charge is : —

" ' Theirs not to reason why ;'

and the soldier in the other brigade is sometimes confronted with the same problem, the same need of doing, of marching according to orders. Why is not it as brave ? And all the reasons are in the heart of God. We can't see them. There is the veil between."

"Yes?" with a lingering inflection.

"I want to thank you for your kindness in behalf of these poor souls. And if he could know—he saw very clearly at the last—alas, that it should have been at the last!"

They were making a circuit of the flower garden, and were now returning to the main path. Out beyond lay a vegetable garden, fields, and great sweeps of meadowland.

"From the top of the hill you can see the Sound," Miss Disbrowe said. "From our upper windows we can catch glimpses of it."

A curious thought of Winchester crossed his mind. Could this girl have been so rigorous in her disregard of his wishes, his regard for his old home?

"I am lingering unconscionably," he said. Yet he was so interested, he could have spent the whole morning speculating about her. He could not come to any sense of real study with these evident contradictions. She seemed so singularly free from young-girl consciousness; yet there was nothing of the worldly woman about her.

"And we are to meet you at Sandon," she said. "The train goes at 9.10. Oh, I hope nothing will happen! It seems too unreal. And yet people in the depths of poverty have fortunes left to them. But," with a vague smile, "the owner

cannot help dying, and as little can he take his fortune with him."

"You think real, earnest repentance rare?"

"Restitution. I have been thinking of this man. It must have been a powerful conviction that induced him to relinquish the charity, and turn back to simple honesty."

"It was." Parke Olmstead colored a little. He went up and stroked Bess's face, and she shook out her mane impatiently. Then he vaulted into the saddle, and touched his hand to his hat.

"Why couldn't Winchester have fallen in love with her! that would have settled it," he thought. Then he realized the tangible differences. "But her soul isn't bound up in the old place as his is. One has the true love of inheritance. If there was any wrong, she is guiltless."

He turned Bess into the mill-yard, though she was not stabled with the draught horses. Winchester came out of the office with a repressed eagerness in every line of his face, amounting almost to a scowl.

"I have seen the old place, the old garden, and Miss Disbrowe. I shouldn't suspect her of fighting," and a softening of the mouth did duty for a smile.

"Miss Disbrowe?" Winchester raised his brows with perplexed inquiry.

"Isn't she" —

"The owner of Chester House is a Miss Sabrina Eastwood. To mention her age would be ungallant, but somewhere about two years and a half ago she attained her majority. She is on the side where it is safe to laugh at time. I do not know anything about Miss Disbrowe. Is she young or old?"

"Young."

"And you found your people?"

"Yes. I had a magnificent ride, thanks to you."

Winchester turned away, and led Bess to the stables. Olmstead had some calls on his mind. He could put them in between this and noon. They had dinner at the old-fashioned hour of twelve at Mrs. Kent's. But as he went he said to himself, "Sabrina Eastwood. 'Sabrina, cool and fair.'" Where had he heard the name before? Some glimmer of the past, something he ought to remember, that evaded him.

Miss Disbrowe suggested it curiously. A bit of hesitation, some puzzle or uncertainty, a touch of pity or regret. Well, it would come to him; many things did, sooner or later.

Miss Eastwood remembered better. When Pearl had rejoiced with, soothed and comforted, her "old ladies," she went up-stairs to tell Sa-

brina the wonderful story. She kept the bit of pasteboard in her hand, bending it gently out and in, with a restless movement that rarely came to her.

"It sounds like a romance," returned Sabrina. "Do you suppose this clergyman made him do it, Pearl, as a Roman priest sometimes insists upon restitution? I am afraid it isn't an underlying law in all creeds. But it must have taken some courage, when the man had resolved to leave a great name behind him,—to found a charity. That is really the strong point in the matter. What is this Mr.—the clergyman, like?"

"Mr. Olmstead, Mr. Parke Olmstead;" and she tossed the card gracefully over into Sabrina's lap. "I can't tell, really. I think I never actually looked. He is tall and has a curious voice,—a sort of penetrating, inspiring, glad, stirring voice; just the kind to come with good tidings. I think he persuaded the dying man, Sabrina; impressed him with the right, until he couldn't help doing justice. I like him. There is something manly in his air and bearing. But I was so taken up with all the other"—

"And that has come to an end," said Sabrina disappointedly. "Now something will happen to Miss Vasilis, and our occupation will be gone. We shall have to go back to the pomps and vanities of the world."

Pearl smiled. "No, it is not anywhere near ended. And even this fortnight — oh, when you think of that dreadful den (can any one call it by a better name?), that wretched little room, with no outlook but the windows opposite, so near, you could see into the neighboring apartment; the vile-smelling court, with its lines of wet clothes; the close, bad air of the house; the commingled odors of cooking; the crying children; the scolding, brawling women! And to have no peace day nor night, amid the multitude no man can number, I was going to say," and Pearl gave a faint smile, full of pathos.

"If you had done nothing else but to give this fortnight's rest, quiet, and loveliness, though it may seem a little thing to you, it is much; for I think by this time Miss Barclay would have died, and now she has lived to hear this good news. It is over seven thousand dollars. But, oh, what it represents to them! And they will still need friends. Besides, we have hardly begun. I do not dare think of all the sufferers" —

"You were to fill the house. There are still some empty rooms."

"And the summer is only just begun. There! I promised to see Desire; let me run away ten minutes."

Sabrina still studied the card. She could see

herself again in that long English drawing-room, where "calls" and "teas" and "evenings" filled up all the time. The delicate homage had pleased her. To be sure, she was a handsome young girl, and a comparative heiress, with her money in her own right. Mrs. Vantine managed beautifully. She was quite at home in London or Paris, Rome or Florence. She had set out to make a good marriage for her ward; and Lord Aylesbury, with a prospective earldom, was fair innings for the elegant young American. She remembered the first morning some one brought in her compatriot, Mr. Olmstead. There was a little knot talking curious things, — Theosophy, Buddhism, lost Oriental religions, — and the scene quite fascinated her. He had been in again one evening. He was going on to Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, of course. He had stood up manfully for the religion of Christ, and demanded for it at least a fair showing with the others. Miss Eastwood had been coquetting with agnosticism, and his comment had been made in a general way. She wondered now why it had influenced her so strongly, when she had never seen him since !

"He will marry Pearl," she said in her thought. "Pearl is born for a clergyman's wife. I wonder some one has not seen it before." She smoothed out the card softly, and slipped it into the novel she

had been reading. Then she took it out, reached over to the table, and took up Browning's Poems, a small volume that opened at "Evelyn Hope."

"I have lived, I shall say, so much since then;
Given up myself so many times"—

were the lines that caught her eyes. She laid the card softly over them. Had he lived "much"? Was he "giving up himself"? She was giving up a little money that she was taking a whim not to spend on herself, and a touch of something like scorn just wavered over her lips.

The large, rather low-ceiled room was beautifully appointed, not especially extravagant. It was summer, and airiness was more harmonious. On the matted floor were two handsome rugs. The furnishing was light French maple; there was a writing-desk with some shelves above, a small cabinet bookcase, two pretty tables, willow chairs, a lounge with a Persian silk spread, a few pictures and "jugs." A low bowl of flowers was on one stand.

She had made additions to the parlors. The house had been comfortably furnished, and it was suitable for the experiment. The parlors were on the north side. The opposite rooms had been devoted to the ladies, since they found Miss Barclay so very feeble. Miss Disbrowe's room opened into hers. Both had spacious end windows, be-

sides the smaller ones. Desire White had taken the room in the ell; it was handy to the back stairs. Miss Vasilis had that at the head of the hall. She had been employed in an art needle-work establishment, and was lame from an incurable hip trouble. The confinement had affected her health so seriously that her eyesight was much impaired. Pearl had known her for a year or two, and had felt that the girl's real genius for designing had been quite overlooked. But now rest was imperative.

"If I were strong in body," she said to Miss Disbrowe, "I would go to some country place and work for my board. I shall have to make some change."

So Pearl had added her to her list. There were dozens of others, but she felt a little hampered in making her selections. There must be no adverse influence in the small household. Neither did she wish to turn her experiment into an actual hospital. But thus far she had been much engrossed in getting matters into running order and learning the capabilities of the place. She had several people in her mind that the great world had overlooked; but she endeavored to persuade Miss Eastwood to add to the number, to exercise her newly awakened sympathies.

"I really don't know of any one," Sabrina had

said. "It is curious, isn't it? And, as I said when we first talked about it, I shouldn't know whether they were worthy or not. There are so many impostors. I have wondered how you could be certain."

"I can't always be certain until I try. I have found impostors too, but one learns to weed them out when one is thoroughly in earnest."

This sentence came back to Sabrina. Was it a day of retrospect? When Mr. Olmstead preached restitution, he must have been very much in earnest. What had happened—why, it was four years ago they had their talk! He was not a clergyman then,—a young man of leisure, it rather seemed to her. What was the vitalizing power? Was it "getting religion"? Pearl said religion was the daily living, not the exceptional moment; the working in the vineyard. And Mrs. Herrick, — even all those who held up the arms of the laborers, who made it possible for them to work all through the long day until even, were laborers as well. Yet it seemed as if she were only playing at the larger purpose. She recalled the day they had gone to make arrangements for the removal of the two ladies from the wretched place they and so many others called home. It sickened her even now. She would have drawn back but for pride's sake. If Pearl, in all her delicate woman-

liness, could go into such foul dens, and come out with no smell of the fire in her garments, why not she? And when the door of the room had been opened and shut again, leaving the noisy, dirty hall on the other side, she had been amazed at the neatness, at the pathetic attempts to make poverty endurable, at the refinement and delicacy of these two women, at their pitiful protest against what seemed charity while they could do for themselves. How had Pearl persuaded them to accept the beneficence? With what rare sweetness, what acceptable grace, she had presented her plea! It was a pleasure to her to bestow. Ah, she gave what was best in herself! Sabrina would have saved it for some auspicious moment, when all the accessories were arranged to a nicety. Could she ever give up her real self? Would not the money always stand in the way?

No, the lack of will stood in the way. She was deceiving herself all along by specious reasoning. Ah, she would not give her fair body to be burned with or without charity, — the great love that God sent into the world!

There was a flush in her face as she rose, but she did not want to look at it in the glass. She shook out her pretty white gown and went downstairs, out on the porch, where the two women sat with their hands clasped in each other's, and

their eyes still showing traces of tears; for the many privations had left their marks on weakened nerves, that even gratitude tried to the uttermost.

"I have come to rejoice with you," Sabrina Eastwood said, and her smile went out to both hearts. Like Stacy Delamater, they had felt a little afraid of this beautiful girl, who seemed to belong to another sphere. She pushed the hassock so near that her soft gown swept over theirs like a billow. And her hand dropped on the wrinkled one, soft still, though so many years had gone over it,—a little kindly touch that somehow took her into the very heart of events. There had been nothing to offer her before but gratitude—an awkward coin often. It was not until they had come to Chester House that they had learned the whole purpose. Sabrina would have it so.

"Would you mind telling me all the story?" she said persuasively. "It is so strange to happen to one!"

The eyes were beguiling in their interest. She desired to reach to that inner living where purposes were really accomplished.

"You have been so good to us," said Mrs. Duane. "O my dear Miss Eastwood, I hope you may never know any such misfortunes! Of course we were not rich in those early times as people

count riches now, but we had the luxury of that day, and were tenderly cared for. It almost seems as if it were centuries ago, or some other beautiful life far removed from what came afterward. I was eighteen when papa died, and that is forty-three years ago. The world seems to have all changed since then. Of five children, Margaret and I are the only ones left. Ah, how happy those past days were! And this Mr. Howland and his wife were old family friends. It seemed nothing to trust him with one's money. My dear, I think we owe this young clergyman a great debt as well. For, though he did not say so, I felt certain it was his influence that led Mr. Howland to do as he did at the last. I went to him once, after he was prospering again, but I saw clearly that he would take no steps toward making amends. And they were living in such a beautiful house, with servants everywhere! We were not the only ones who suffered. I used to think the Lord had forgotten; but there is a special way for us, and it is not shown until the day comes when we have to walk therein. I can't help hoping the Lord will show him more mercy than he showed to many others."

Pearl was a little surprised to find Miss Eastwood listening attentively to bits and snatches of life, that modern conditions had changed almost

entirely. Would they change as much in another half-century? Then they two would have touched the far point of middle life.

Pearl took Miss Barclay in to dinner. Mrs. Duane seemed small and shrunken, leaning on Sabrina's arm.

"I don't wonder you are quite in love with her," Mrs. Duane said to Pearl that evening, as they were wandering about the flower-beds. "O my dear Miss Disbrowe, do young women like Miss Eastwood know how much they have in their hands, along with their beauty and their sweetness and their wealth? Why, it almost seems as if the whole world must join and worship them for trying to make life better to poor, weary, suffering souls! Since I have seen so much of you two, I begin to wish I could live my own life over again. There might be opportunities of making it better. One doesn't realize how grand it is, when one is shut up in a back room in a tenement house. If many of the poor souls could be taken out — they are worth saving."

"The least of these," returned Pearl softly. "I think we are learning."

And it seemed the next morning as if there was a new purpose manifested in Sabrina's face, an earnestness in her voice that had not been there before.

"I am going to be nurse to-day," she said, as Mrs. Duane was lingering about her sister with touches of tenderness that only devoted love can bestow. "I think you may safely leave her with me."

Miss Barclay smiled. It was delightful to resign herself to the fascination.

Miss Vasilis brought her designing down on the porch and kept them company, listening to the pleasant bits of talk. Her life had run in a still different channel. There had never been any luxuries in it, hardly comforts,—an inefficient mother, an intemperate father, brothers straying off and lost to sight; a pitiful little figure sitting up in a high window, sewing, crocheting baby sacks and hoods, singing plaintive little songs to herself, keeping sweet and simple among the coarseness of the outer living. Her mother's death was hardly a loss; then her father was arrested for vagrancy. She joined forces with a poor girl who had herself and her baby to keep. She was quick about all kinds of fancy-work, and raised herself in the social scale until she had attained to very tolerable living. For two years she had worked in the art establishment, and dreamed beautiful dreams over her work,—dreams that educated and refined and illumined her whole pathway. But at twenty she was worn out. The

streams of life had been drained too heavily. She had come to know Miss Disbrowe quite well, and in her desperate strait had appealed to her for advice.

"I shall ask you into the 'King's Country,'" Pearl had answered with her tender smile.

"The 'King's Country!'" little stunted Rhea Vasilis had cried in amaze. "Why, Miss Disbrowe, that ought to be next door to heaven!"

"Come and make it so. Come and rest in the shade of the trees and hear the birds sing. My poor little pilgrim, it is time that some one gave you a foretaste of the better land."

And it seemed like heaven that day, watching and listening to Miss Eastwood. The girl sat with a little drawing-case on her knees, doing sprays of conventional flowers in colored pencils, wonderful arabesques and scrolls, until the lines all ran together, and from very weakness of sight she was forced to lay by her work. Then she crept into the hammock, and, curling herself up like a kitten, listened to the exquisite voice that had been trained to perfectness in accent, but kept the wonderful charm of emotional purity. There were moments when she shut out the swaying gold and emerald lights with her hands, and cried softly from excess of feeling akin to desperation.

Why was it this beautiful girl, in reality only a little older than herself, should have so many good gifts? It was the old question men and women have been fighting ever since the world began. Why should this man have so much? Why should the ninety and nine be crowded in holes and dens, and go without all but a wretched sustenance, while the hundredth one had a path through the roses and lilies of life?

CHAPTER VI

TO THINK OF WHAT WAS IN HER WILL

SABRINA EASTWOOD was intensely self-conscious. Her training had made her that. From early girlhood up to this period the thought of impressing others had been instilled into her as a second life, as the great impulse and governing motive. It was not whether this or that gift must be trained to a means of support ; it was that they all conduced to win the admiration of the world in which she moved. A less sweet and wholesome nature would have been made supremely selfish and indifferent to the needs of others. Back of all this was the yearning child sympathy for her father. Even now she could not analyze it ; and, as was best, she called it love. He was always very gentle with her. She had wished many times that she could have him back, but she had never desired the days and weeks with her mother. The very patience she had learned to exercise with the fretful, unreasonable, and disappointed woman had developed into the serene

graciousness that people termed her "repose of manner" and her high-bred air. During the five years of prosperity she had seen very little of her mother. With the interviews had been mingled sharp criticisms on her figure, her manners, the care of her complexion, the hope that she, Mrs. Eastwood, would, after all her other dissatisfactions with life, have a handsome young girl to chaperon. She counted eagerly on this, that was not to be, for her pleasure and reward.

Mrs. Vantine took Sabrina into account in an equally worldly fashion. A girl with less money and less beauty would not have met with so much indulgence at her hands. She was a little sorry now that she had yielded to so many of her whims.

"I really don't see what Sabrina Eastwood is waiting for," she said rather crossly to her husband, when Sabrina's answer to her letter was under consideration. "She'll do just as her mother did. Laura Hollis was a pretty girl, not handsome, but pretty and attractive, and could have married well. But she went through the woods and picked up a crooked stick. To be sure the Eastwoods had good blood, but they were poor. The stamina had gone out of them. He was quite an old man, too, but she was far from youth. Sabrina has a good deal of the Eastwood

style. But what possesses her to cling so to those Wendover people, I can't divine. And to bury herself at Chester House! The only offset I can see is her being fresh and radiant for an autumn campaign. Many of the girls get really worn out with summer's dissipation."

Mr. Vantine paced the room with an air of vexation. Then he said: "Jarvis expects she'll be along with us; he's wonderfully taken with her."

"There will be no rival at Chester House to interfere with his fancy," was the rather ironical reply. "Perhaps it will not be a bad experiment. A girl fed on the admiration of society cannot exist very long without it."

Was it an undercurrent of this that rendered Sabrina Eastwood so gracious and fascinating this day? She had studied with a touch of newly awakened curiosity the source of Pearl's attractiveness. The artistic side of her nature had been touched by it; but not yet did she comprehend the high accord of spiritual living that so informed Pearl Disbrowe. Miss Barclay felt the fine influence that took her back to the years of her lost youth. There was something flattering in the delicate attention, and the rich feast spread out before her. She did not understand Elizabeth Browning; she had been brought up on Mrs. Hemans: but the trained voice made all things

beautiful. The younger girl, with her hidden face full of tears of transport, longing, and despair, felt the quiver in every nerve.

There had been dinner and a rest. It was latter afternoon now, with long shadows among the greenery. Miss Barclay's chair had been pushed farther out. There were times when breathing was difficult, and she needed the current of air. Sabrina sat on the step, her soft white muslin falling about her and flowing outward, her hair in the Greek coil she affected so much, her brown eyes bathed in mysterious lights. Winding slowly around the path, Parke Olmstead caught sight of her. The infinite grace of the pose would have made the fortune of a sculptor; but it was not until she raised her eyes and glanced out steadily that the tide of recollection came to him, with the impression of having seen her in some other existence.

He handed out Mrs. Duane and Miss Disbrowe. They crossed the little space. Miss Eastwood rose and held out her hand. If Miss Barclay had dreamed of lost youth, Esther Duane had been in the magical land, and quaffed the revivifying draught to the refreshment of soul and body. Her faded eyes were softly bright; there was a delicate pink in her cheeks, and her lips were tremulous with the new life.

"O my dear!" she said, clasping the fair, slim fingers, and passing on to her sister. But as Miss Eastwood spoke to Pearl, Olmstead's circuit of remembrance was completed; he hardly heard the introduction.

"We have gone half around the world to meet each other," he said in a voice that sent a quick thrill through Miss Eastwood. "All day I have been haunted by a curious impression that kept eluding me at the supreme moment. Miss Disbrowe, I met your friend in London—four years ago, is it not? And how delighted I am to take up the acquaintance again the future will prove better than any words."

The curious doubt he had been fighting for hours vanished. Unconsciously he had been swayed by a few words from Winchester, and he was interested in the peculiar kind of complication between them. But standing there face to face, her high-bred, subtle beauty swayed him with an emotion so delightful he did not care to analyze it.

Pearl and the two ladies were talking. There had been no mistake in the matter. All the old debt with interest had been repaid. They forgave Mr. Howland in their great thankfulness. But what could make amends for the years wherein they had suffered? Could he look "across the gulf" and see the burden of them?

"Miss Disbrowe has been explaining to me your plan of the summer," Olmstead was saying, as they turned a little aside. "I want to thank you personally, and ask for a small share in the good work. You two deserve a great deal of credit for being willing to relinquish your personal pleasures. You know I am not ignorant of them."

A soft smile, just vague enough in its admiration to render it complimentary, crossed his fine face.

Some inward consciousness, or the greater desire of being perfectly honorable to Pearl, moved Miss Eastwood. He should have the full opportunity of admiring her.

"She would not say it was her plan, I know, but it was. I found it out quite accidentally. And my share is this old house that was likely to be tenantless for the summer. But she is finding the people. It is a new country, and we are colonizing — is that appropriate?"

She raised her eyes with a proud kind of frankness that went far toward making them dangerous.

"Mrs. Duane gave me such a quaint, beautiful idea as she was talking. It was good enough to use in a sermon; in fact, it might do for the text. She said, 'In the King's Country.'"

"That was Miss Disbrowe's name. It was quite

new to me. But — you surely are no stranger in it?" and she paused with a delicate hesitation.

"Let me see," he said. "I need not ask if you remember one morning — so fresh in my mind that it might have been yesterday. How charming it was at Lady Morley's! We do not seem to have much of that kind here. How they all talked of everything! One and another aired his ideas, and no one really took offence. I was sorry not to go again." His voice dropped, while his thoughts seemed wandering back.

"You were going on to Egypt. And I suppose you had resolved" — She was a little curious to know if his plans had been definitely arranged.

"No, I had not resolved upon anything. I had graduated and gone abroad, settling myself at a German University after a summer on the Continent. So you see I had come from the hotbed of discussions on all manner of social and religious questions. How to raise human souls and bodies to a higher level — we sneer gently at ideals, but we have a great fashion of idealizing theories. This or that will most benefit the coming man, — the appeal to his finer moral sense, — but if he grovels like the brute beast, and there is nothing to him but so much brute strength, that can till a field, guide some machine, or delve in a mine, where is the nobler aspiration to which we can

appeal? And it is the man of to-day who is to be helped, that he may aid the generations to come. Whether we shall preach to him that all existence is essentially evil, and that there is no hope of anything better; whether we shall preach the one absorption of all in an endless Nirvana, or that Christianity is the hope for the race? No other contains the inspiration of ultimate victory in the struggle; no other holds out the hand of firm fellowship to man. And when I became convinced of this, I went to work in good earnest. On my return I entered a divinity school. Last winter I was in New York. I have taken a friend's place now, who has had an opportunity of a rare holiday after a dozen or so years of steady work. I had many holidays at first, thanks to the generosity of a kind old uncle. There, have I bored you about myself? It is not very much when all is said."

How much had these years been to her? A search for pleasure, and secret dissatisfaction.

"You remember they were talking religion when I saw you the last time," and a smile crossed his face. "It is odd to take up the acquaintance just where it broke off, to find you have gone half around the world, and reached the same conclusion."

"I don't know that I have," she interposed hurriedly, flushing the most delicate, wavering pink,

that made her lovelier than ever. Perhaps, too, the endeavor of the day, the putting aside of self even for a few hours, had left its peculiar impress on every expression. "I asked Miss Disbrowe to let me come into this new country with her, and she consented. I do not seem to be doing any real work. I think I have been playing at it. All these things appeal to the generous and heroic side of one's nature. We get quite in love with the idea of doing good, but I wonder" —

"Well?" he rejoined.

"I did not know a soul to bring into this lovely country. So, you see, I haven't gone into the wayside places. Yes, all the credit is due to Miss Disbrowe."

She would establish the matter on the foundations of utter truth. She would not give Pearl short measure in any respect.

Olmstead smiled. "A great many hands are needed in this work, Miss Eastwood. Not the least little thing will ever go to waste. For if the deed fails of its high purpose, the grace of the effort is left. And you see it might not have been possible for Miss Disbrowe to materialize her thought but for your assistance. When you give of the best you have" —

"Is it the best you have, when it costs nothing? It would have been a pity for the house to stand empty" —

"Yes, it is a delightful old place." He thought of Winchester's protest. Why could not these two come to some amicable arrangement?

"Ask me to take a walk with you around the old garden. I didn't have half a ramble the other morning." He stepped down and gave a slight turn to his shoulder. "You see it will take them some time to talk over the day's events," and he made a gentle inclination toward Miss Barclay. "And I have a favor to ask, a candidate to propose for this delightful corner of the 'King's Country.'"

The paths were all shady now. Sabrina Eastwood followed the manly figure, whose very step had a certainty in it. Why had she taken a sudden liking to him four years ago? Why had people seemed different to her afterward? She always remembered the brave, upright fearlessness with which he had made his stand.

"Miss Disbrowe was enlightening me about the 'between people,' as she calls them. And one as quaintly charming as this Mrs. Duane could have been the heroine of an old-fashioned book, or stepped out of a picture in some old Colonial house. I am doubly glad to have been the bearer of good news to her. And this, you see, has brought me to the 'King's Country.' Now that I understand its beneficence, I can't help wishing another poor soul could have a share in it."

"Yes?" she answered half inquiringly.

Olmstead had not been especially impressed with her beauty in that past episode, there were so many lovely women. Perhaps it had increased, matured, since then. It seemed to-day the sort of beauty one could feel, as if it carried with it a kind of atmosphere that penetrated other pulses. She was in a curiously fascinating mood.

"And your pilgrim?" she said. "Tell me about her!"

"Do you like people's stories? That is the only way to get at the real heart of the matter. Mine is one of the 'between' cases, — a pitiful one, without being tragic; and I have been casting about for some pleasant place where there might be wells of water and trees of palm. Did it ever occur to you how many pleasant resting-places the Israelites found in the wilderness? My poor pilgrim has had a rather sad life. She gave up the man she loved because her mother objected; also a sister, who had married very well, that is, with plenty of money. Perhaps her lover was not worthy of her. Anyway, he went to the bad afterward. Her mother was an invalid many years. She was nurse, governess, seamstress, house-keeper, for presently misfortunes fell upon her sister. She is worn out and something of an invalid now herself. The family are to go out to

Lake Superior, where the husband expects to retrieve his fortunes. They do not need her services, and the physician has said she could not stand the climate. She desires to earn her own support, and applied to a friend of mine, who could find a place for her if she were in ordinary health ; but it will take weeks of rest to restore her. I suppose there are kindly women who would take such a person for a small compensation, but so far we have not found the right place. You see, it ought to be where all things would contribute toward her recovery. I can just understand how it would be here with Miss Disbrowe" —

"Yes, yes," Sabrina cried eagerly. "Oh, how do you find these people?"

"This particular one I have known of for the last ten years, but I never realized all the dreariness of life among the poor until recently. I may have been looking more closely into these matters. I am coming to believe that people need, and perhaps deserve, more happiness than their fellow-creatures are willing to allow them. We seem to pile up a great deal of duty and sacrifice for them, while we sun ourselves on the delightful side of life. And when one finds two young women, with so many gifts, willing to cross over, to take some of their poorer sisters by the hand and lead them to pleasant places" —

He was pulling the long sprays of southern-wood through his hand, and it gave the air a pungent fragrance. It was a hand with a good deal of character, rather long, with vigor in every one of the firm fingers.

"But this girl's sister," Sabrina said, with a nervous flush under the implied praise. "One would naturally look for her to care. Not but that Miss Disbrowe will be glad to add her to the family, and yesterday I was beginning to feel anxious lest our experiment should fall through."

He laughed softly. Then, as his face settled into graver lines, he returned to the subject.

"I am afraid relationship doesn't always count. The Wise One said: 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother.' Still, that does not excuse the tie of nature. There ought to be more absolute kindness in it. Children allow their parents to spend an old age in charitable institutions, perhaps the almshouse. Not that old age is always lovely; indeed, it is often trying. I know of a household that an old mother makes miserable. The son, an only child, by the way, and the daughter-in-law, are quite too conscientious to shift the burden. She was a good mother in her earlier years, and he is a good son. I often think how happy they might be. Perhaps some grace is being perfected; we cannot see all," and he paused.

"But we were talking of Miss Searle. I ought to explain that a year or so ago she had an opportunity to marry that her sister felt she ought to accept. Relations have been strained since then. The children are nearly grown, so they do not require her services. When women have passed their youth and have no regular business training, it is hard to find places in which to put them. This girl would make an excellent housekeeper, but the first requisite is health. She is ambitious to earn her own living. She goes to my friend some time this week, but she needs a long, restful change. We were planning how to bring it about."

"It is a pathetic story," Miss Eastwood said, much moved. "And you will send her here at once?"

"We shall be only too glad. My friend is a very busy woman. She and Miss Disbrowe ought to know each other; but eager as she is for good work, she can only devote the odds and ends of time to it. And the fields of labor are so large!"

Miss Eastwood glanced up and met the eyes that had been studying her. Something in them, more of admiration than disfavor, stirred her strangely, and brought a wandering tint to her cheek.

"I was walking around here yesterday morning

with Miss Disbrowe," he began, and there was a suggestion of a change in his voice that she noted, yet was not displeased with. "It is so beautiful! It ought never to be disturbed. But the ruthless procession of business will begin to tramp over it presently. I heard something in the city to-day — it may touch you. Up here — out beyond, there's a small settlement called Long Meadows."

"Yes; we drove over there a few days ago. A farming section. A great, beautiful, level stretch of country, orchards and fields; then, to the east, a small river. The creek empties into that. You see, I have been making myself acquainted with my surroundings. It is lovely and quiet. I suppose people have lived there for generations. Don't you imagine they must get tired sometimes, and long for a change? I am afraid I should hold out both hands of welcome to an earthquake."

"The earthquake is coming, I think." He wondered how Winchester would take this news. What would Miss Eastwood do? "I dropped into a friend's office to-day on a matter of business. A large property syndicate had their maps out, and were talking to a party of manufacturers. When I heard one of them say, 'The next considerable tract is Greenfields,' I was interested at once. I learned from my friend the plan on foot is to start a factory town. Already some of the farms have

been purchased. Property is extremely low. The railroad is convenient; the river and the sound are factors. They are very much in earnest I believe."

"The township line reaches this estate." She indicated the north-easterly direction with an inclination of her head. "And there is all the old farm; but it would be years before they could stretch out to us."

"Business takes rapid strides." They had gone outside of the flower garden. The path now was a narrow one, made by the regular tread of one person. She was a little in advance, her shoulder half turned, her side face in direct range of his glance. The exquisite contour, the proud sweep of the neck and throat, the softly rounded chin, the curves of the lips, strangely tender to-day, the long lashes falling over the brown eyes, the stray ends of soft light hair that clung about brow and neck in suggestive tendrils, the subtle sensibility of complexion, the curious sense and presence of repose that veiled the currents underneath, moved Parke Olmstead powerfully. Yet he seemed looking at her with the eyes of another; and he wondered again why Hollis Winchester had not bought back his birthright with love.

They came out to a rustic bench fastened at the ends to two great elms. She waved him to a seat.

At their feet lay the old garden—the old house, spreading out low and quaintly, its roof moss-grown in patches. How dear it was to Winchester!

“Yes,” he resumed, “business takes rapid strides; and if it threatens to engulf you, what then?”

Sabrina Eastwood drew her brows a little, in sudden thought. Why had her mother cared for the place? She was a Hollis, to be sure, but her parents had not lived here. There could be no special association. Of course she felt bitterly toward the Winchesters, because she held that they had defrauded her out of her rights for many years, and she thought of the young man who could not be many miles distant. How had he prospered these two years? She turned her eyes to the wide stretch of land reaching out to Long Meadows.

“It is a quiet, restful old place,” she said softly, “and yet I have no especial association with it. My grandmother in her old age came here with her second husband, a man a dozen or so years younger than she. There was a good deal of bitterness in my mother’s time, several lawsuits, as the property naturally reverted to the heirs. It had been unlawfully willed away, and this is the first time I have ever stayed at Chester House. I offered it to Miss Disbrowe

for her good work. Perhaps I haven't the kind of reverence for old places that people feel who are born in them. I might be interested in the new city. I am afraid I am hopelessly modern ; but if they build a town of work out yonder, why not build a town of leisure here ? ”

“ A ‘ King’s Country ’ ! A refuge for the weary, a breathing place where the air comes fresh from the hills, and the sky broods over all with infinite love. ”

His voice was grave and sweet. He was thinking of choosing between her and Hollis Winchester.

CHAPTER VII

THE SHADOW OF WANT HAS WIDTH AND DEPTH

SWINGING slowly there in the hammock, Rhea Vasilis listened again to the story that she had set down in her incredulous fashion as a great mistake on some one's part. All day swift shudders had crept over her, as she pictured Mrs. Duane's disappointment. Such blessed things happened in books, but in the life she had lived there were only misfortunes. One might come up a little, a very little indeed, — she had. But something always thrust them back. There was sickness, or one was out of employment. Some girl married full of happy dreams, and the man turned out a drunkard, or he was lazy ; perhaps was proved to have another wife, or deserted the woman to whom he had promised life-long care and tenderness. Among the workers in the art rooms, there were two young women who had babies dependent on them, through mistakes of this kind. There were other sad stories. One went down, down. There were terrible things hap-

pening, but never any real, substantial joys. She had experienced a deep, intense sympathy with these two women, who seemed to have come out of another world than hers. But so many paths tended to the same end, — that wide kingdom of sorrow, sacrifice, hopelessness !

She had come to Chester House with a vague impression that there was something for her to do. She could wash dishes, dust rooms, set tables, sew : she was very handy with children's clothes ; and when Miss Disbrowe said with a smile, " You will find something to do," she had come with an unhesitating faith that a full return would be exacted from her. All her life long, no one had ever offered her something for nothing. When she had been out of work, she had sewed for poor women who hardly knew how to handle a needle, or had taken care of babies for her meals. And when she reached this lovely place in her life, where the work was beautiful, the room comfortably large, the wages really more than she needed to spend, so that she could lay by a trifle each week ; when for the first time she dared to indulge in a bit of exultation, and believe truly that her feet were on firm ground instead of shifting sand, the shadow had followed her with a stealthy step.

First it had been a dull, aching pain in her side,

then a cough, a rise of fever and headache in the afternoons, until her eyes were almost blinded. She could eat no supper, but crawled into her bed, and lay there alternately shivering and burning, sleepless until almost morning. The cunning of her hand deserted her. Sometimes she almost spoiled her work, often wasted her time, and began to earn less. Her little hoard had to be doled out for medicine. The cough grew worse, and the dispensary doctor recommended country, and a change of employment. One day she had fainted. Miss Disbrowe had come in to see if it was possible to change part of the design in some unfinished work. And Rhea Vasilis, bolstered up in an arm-chair by the open window, had taken courage from the inspiration of the sweet, sympathetic voice, and put her few questions. For death did not look inviting. And the doctor had said, — perhaps he meant to startle her into the necessity of change ; he was rather gruff about it, — “ If you go on in this way, you will be dead in less than a year ! ” Dead and buried in some out-of-the-way place, — she knew well enough where it would be. She would a hundred times rather die in the country, and have some grass and daisies growing over her. She had hungered for it, desired it as she had never desired anything before. Still, she did not long to die, and she had come

gladly to this place of refuge, giving up her room, selling the few pieces of furniture she had stinted herself to pay for, packing up her scanty belongings, and bringing her precious hoard of money, much reduced now.

There was Desire White in the kitchen, a capable Yankee woman, tall and strong, who had never been ailing a whole week in her life, and who, when Rhea timidly offered her services, said in her brisk but not unkindly fashion: —

“Land sakes, child! you don’t look strong enough to shoo out flies! Miss Disbrowe just brought you here for a restin’ spell; and the Lord knows you need it bad as anybody I ever see! ‘N’ as for work, there ain’t half enough to keep me busy! Seems to me this ‘King’s Country’ is mighty near to heaven, ‘n’ you just enjoy it all you can.”

Pearl had bought her a portfolio and some paper and pencils for designing. She crept up and down like a shy little mouse; she rambled about the garden; she swung in the hammock; she watched the two beautiful girls and the two elderly ladies. Sometimes she wondered if she really was alive; if in an hour’s time she could get back to New York; or if she had “fallen on sleep,” and awakened in some other land. It was so quiet, the air was so fragrant. There were

songs of birds, the hum of bees, the chirp and drone of insects,—the whole wide world, it seemed to her. Only there was the same sky, with its sun by day and its stars at night.

There had been so many things for Pearl to do, so much going about and planning, that Rhea had been left a good deal to her own devices. All these people were so different from any she had ever known. Miss Eastwood was like the elegant ladies who came into the art workrooms at intervals, often to stroll through the handsome establishment below. Between her and all these there was fixed a great gulf. On her side they never expected to overpass it. Miss Eastwood had not learned the language that translates between the two. She praised Rhea's pretty designing: she even recommended some books; but reading was tiresome work for the poor girl. She went almost wild with delight when, from her dark corner, she listened to such music as she had rarely heard; but she hid all the rapture and the tears.

Miss Barclay had been quite ill for the first week, unable to leave her room. Mrs. Duane had devoted all her time to her sister. They were still strange studies to Miss Vasilis. She had seen old women, generally of the hard, unlovely kind, many of them addicted to beer. The surprise of it gave her a curious nervous sense of

hesitation, as if she were groping in some blind way out of the hard, ugly prose of her own bald living; but all was blurred and confused. She could make nothing plain, except that on the other side there were many delights she had never even dreamed about.

To-day the reading had moved her immeasurably. She did not understand it, but it had penetrated every fibre of her being. Yet with the side of prosaic experience, narrow enough, poor girl, she had thought of the two who had gone for the "fortune." Something would happen. The things one longed for and dared to count on never came to pass. Her few little flashes of comforting fire had always burned to ashes before she had been fairly warmed.

"You see," Miss Disbrowe was saying, "you will be quite a rich woman."

Then it was absolute certainty! The girl raised her head, and peered out of dark, passionate eyes. Miss Barclay was very pale. Her eyes had the slight redness in their rims of soft crying, but they were tears of great joy, great penitence also. For there had been hard, desperate hours, when she had quite lost faith in God. In the depths of despair he had sent his angel to comfort her, to prepare the way. She had been brought out to the high places. She was not denied a sight of

the promised land. For she had realized in this brief while that it was not very far off. Now she could go contentedly, for the little sister — Esther had always been that to her — would have no more pinches and hardships.

“Five thousand of it is in some excellent stock that pays ten per cent ; quite an income itself, you see. The rest is in government bonds. Mr. Olmstead advised that we should make no change. And it has been such a lovely day! Are you quite sure I have kept my senses, Miss Disbrowe, and not acted like a foolish young girl?”

Pearl Disbrowe kissed her, and said: “There has so much dropped out of your life, that you ought to go back and have it over again, and I rejoice in your joy.”

Then she slipped away for a little rest and refreshment. Mrs. Duane bent over her sister.

“I couldn’t help but think of Daisy to-day,” she said in an almost breathless tone. “So many times I have given thanks that she was not here, sharing our hardships and privations, and having to live out of reach of the beautiful things of the world. But to-day she’s haunted me. I have seen her in every pretty young girl. She would have been just twenty.”

“Yes, if you could have her,” Margaret Barclay said to her childless sister.

Rhea Vasilis had lived with no one to care about her, no one to want her. She had known a child's terror and suffering in a hospital ward; she had gone cold and hungry; she had worked early and late. All the money she possessed in the world was in an old pocket-book up-stairs, hidden in the corner of the drawer. Why had not something happened to her as well? If God sent this to Mrs. Duane, why had not something been sent to her? Money coming in, whether one worked or not! Why were these young girls straight and strong and beautiful, while she needed strength so much? Why were some people blest and happy, and she solitary and alone? If God were all-wise and all-powerful, and loved people, why did he not do these wonderful things for all of them, instead of a very few?

There was an awful, uncomprehended sense of loss. She had thought little about it before. All day her mind had to be on her work, and at night she was too tired, even if she could not sleep. It was very good in Miss Disbrowe to ask her here, but she did not belong in this beautiful place. It seemed to her vague unreason the longer she stayed the harder it would be to go back to the old life, the long, wearing hours, the tired fingers and aching head. Had she eaten of the tree of knowledge to her sorrow?

Miss Eastwood and the clergyman came around the path presently. She had a great cluster of flowers in her belt that he had gathered. She sat down on the step with an easy grace, and he declined the chair Mrs. Duane proffered, leaning his compact figure against the square column, just where Rhea could see his face through the meshes of the hammock. It was strong and pleasant, and his voice had a curious effect upon her. If he could tell her — but the ministers always sent you to church. Rich people could give away money and visit the sick ; but what part of religion came to the poor ? Some of the girls she knew went to mass, and paid in some curious way to have their sins forgiven. She had tried not to sin, to be rigorously honest in the workroom, to tell the truth — what else was there she could do ?

Desire's supper-bell rang. Pearl, in her capacity of hostess, invited Mr. Olmstead, who did not need much persuasion. He and Miss Eastwood assisted Miss Barclay, and the others walked together.

"Where is Miss Vasilis?" asked Pearl. "Will you please find her, Desire?"

Rhea would not come. She had a headache, and did not want any supper.

"She's a queer little thing," said Sabrina. "Sometimes she seems an ignorant, wondering

child, then there comes such a wild, eerie look in her face as makes you almost believe in transmigration. What will you do with her, Pearl?"

"I've hardly had time to think. She is one of the lonely little waifs, the driftwood of which there is so much in cities. It is very hard to be anchored to no one."

The waif raised up her slight figure and looked down the grayish road, crossed by long, quivering shadows of branching trees. There was a sudden revolt of the Ishmaelitish blood. She longed to get away somewhere else, among her own kind; for this would come to an end presently. It filled her with such strange thoughts of unattainable things. She must go where there was work she could do; she must get back to her own life. Not in the crowded city and the small, dingy room, perhaps—

She crept softly up-stairs, and flung herself on the bed. Her temples throbbed and her eyeballs seemed on fire. A light step came across the hall, and Miss Disbrowe's voice broke the silence as she laid her cool hand on the hot brow.

"My dear child!" she exclaimed, "you are ill and feverish. I have hardly had time to look after you. Desire will make you a cooling drink. Do your eyes hurt? I will come up again and sit with you, and bathe your head" —

"I want to be alone," Rhea said sharply. Her face was turned to the wall. Then, after a moment's silence, she added, "You have been very good to me. But you don't understand" —

"You have been too much alone. I think I could understand."

There was no answer or sign of confidence. Miss Disbrowe bent and kissed the throbbing brow, smoothed the dark, tumbled hair, soft as silk. Then, not knowing what better to do, she left her, and sent Desire up with iced lemonade; but even Desire's ministrations were repulsed.

The twilight filled the sky, and made dense shadows, sent wafts of fragrance up and down. Oh, what was that? They were singing. She heard the rich, penetrating voice of Mr. Olmstead, the clear, swelling tones of Miss Eastwood, the strange sweetness of Miss Disbrowe's pure contralto. It seemed almost as if she could arise and join them — her very lips trembled. But no — she was not of their kind; she was so far outside; and yet it moved her immeasurably. Oh, she must get away somewhere; she could not stay and listen, and break her heart over it all.

She rose as if in a spell, and picked up a few of her belongings, her precious hoard of money, and stole wearily down-stairs. They were all in the lighted parlor, but she did not need to pass

the door. She could go out of the side entrance. Bose came and snuffed her, then looked after her doubtfully, as if not quite sure of the propriety of this nocturnal journey. She hurried on with her short step and slight limp, walked so fast, indeed, that now and then she was compelled to halt for breath. The old pain came back in her side.

Where she should go, she had not thought. Her brain was in a whirl. Did they take this road to reach the station? Was she forgetting everything? It grew darker. The stars came out in great throngs, but the moon would be late to-night. The trees loomed up ghostly. How awfully still it was! She had never been out in the wide country at night, though she had threaded city streets. She hurried on, frightened, breathless, tired with a kind of deadly fatigue she had never known before. Then she dropped down, and the rest was sweet.

When Parke Olmstead went striding along with just time to catch the train at Sandon, he saw an odd pile of something in the path before him, some weary animal doubtless, and he turned aside. Then he stepped back, struck a match, and glanced sharply. One thin white hand clutched a bundle. Why! surely he had seen the face. Could it be Miss Disbrowe's pensioner? At all

events they would take her in, and he could think of no other place of refuge.

He lifted her in his arms; and though she seemed light enough at first, he had to pause a time or two for breath. Bose came down the path and gave a low growl. There were lights moving about up-stairs. He spoke cheerfully to the dog; then the hall door was opened.

"Sakes alive!" said Desire, "is that you, Mr. Olmstead? Miss Disbrowe's e'en a'most wild! Oh, have you found that child? She was sick or something, and we've been hunting everywhere" —

Pearl came flying down, with terrified eyes.

"Oh, is it Rhea Vasilis? What can have happened? It must have been the fever. Where did you find her?"

"Down the road a short distance. She is unconscious, I think. Where shall I take her?"

"Bring her up to her room, if you will be so good. My poor little Rhea! She has been strange these few days back, — homesick, I should say, if there had been anything to really long for."

Sabrina was still in her soft, floating gown of white, with pale green ribbons. Olmstead always remembered the picture she made.

"What could have possessed the child!" cried

Desire. "And here's her bundle tied up — just's if she was going to run away!"

The helpless hand had unclosed and dropped it. Olmstead laid her on the bed.

"You do not think" — a terror came in Miss Eastwood's face.

"Try rubbing with alcohol. She is not dead. She has some pulse, and her heart beats slowly. Give her a stimulant. I will wait and see if a doctor is needed."

He led Miss Eastwood down-stairs again. She shivered a little. What if there should be something serious — of contagion she did not want to think.

Desire rubbed vigorously: What a pinched little face, with the wide lids drawn over the large eyes, and fringed with long black lashes. The nostrils were almost transparent, the chin sharpened, the lips thin and colorless. But presently a long, sighing breath moved the small frame.

"Desire — nothing has been said to her? She can't have thought" —

"Well, she's kinder moped about. I guess I'd better let her wiped dishes and such. She wanted to. Mebbe she's felt out of place. But everybody's been good to her, if that is what you mean. There's lots of queer cattle in big cities, Miss Pearl, and it isn't to be looked for that they'd fall

into different ways all in a minute. There ! she's come all around."

Rhea Vasilis opened her eyes wide.

"What was it ?" she asked. "I thought — I meant — I do not belong here, you know."

"Yes, you do." Pearl pressed the soft hand. Then she summoned Mr. Olmstead again.

"There is a little fever rising, but her pulse is stronger. I have one or two remedies with me — I have so much occasion for them. If you like to trust her to me and your good Mrs. White for the night — I do not think there is any real danger. In the morning you can summon a physician."

"Yes," Desire White answered, settling the matter with a certain authority.

Presently the house quieted down. Desire arranged a comfortable and pillow on the floor for herself ; a high-backed easy-chair, a table, and a lamp in the hall for Mr. Olmstead. Pearl made another journey down-stairs, to relieve the fears of the ladies.

Mrs. Duane came out in the hall with her, and laid her hand on Pearl's arm. "Poor thing !" she said ; "poor little thing ! What a hard fight it must have been with no mother or sister ! She seems like some strange flower, grown among weeds, that's never had the right kind of soil or nourishment. It is harder for the young. My

dear, God has been so good to us, to me, that I want to help do a little work in your garden in the 'King's Country.' ”

Then she kissed Miss Disbrowe, and slipped away.

Sabrina was waiting up-stairs. “Pearl,” she began, “I don't want you to run any risk. Are you never afraid when you go round in those dens and holes? And I hope she will not turn out an ingrate on your hands. Do you suppose she was really going away, with that queer little bundle? She's a curious little thing—I shouldn't know what to make of her, what to do with her. There is such a general complaint among people who do charity work” —

Pearl smiled. “‘We love Him because He first loved us.’ And maybe that is a part of the great gladness that is to transfigure the world—they may love us after a while, because we have first gone to them and loved them.”

They had gone to well-bred and appreciative Miss Barclay. But—down in the very depths—and to hope and work for all! Ah, that was a higher grace. Could she—did she care to attain unto it?

The night was in the main quiet. Towards morning the fever increased, and Rhea Vasilis grew restless and wandering; but Olmstead saw

nothing to call for alarm. Soon after daylight Amos Pike harnessed up the horse and drove Olmstead in to the station, and brought out the village doctor. The fragrance of the morning floated about as incense offered from every tree and shrub, from the long reaches of dew-gemmed grass, and the birds were at their matins. Ah, why had man brought woe and want and sorrow into this beautiful world! Why had he bound burdens grievous to be borne on his fellow-man! Ah, thank God, there were some hands willing to take hold and lighten them a little!

CHAPTER VIII

WHETHER IT IS BETTER TO TURN AND FIGHT

OLMSTEAD had thrown himself on his own bed and taken a late morning nap, and then had a solitary breakfast. Calista Spence was of the old lady's opinion that "nothing was too good for the minister," so he found some unwonted indulgences. After that it had been a busy and perplexing day. Work was slacking up in many of the factories. A new scale of wages was being considered. Then there was the usual sickness in the crowded tenements. For crowded they were, even with all the outlying country,—waste places that were no longer profitable for farms, but too valuable their owners thought for gardens for the poorer classes.

Brentford was not a pretty town, or a town reared on the grand foundation of good will to men. Some large factories had been established, for the economical reason that land and labor were cheap. The young men from the adjacent farms had rushed in; then the foreign element crowded

them hard. Most of the owners and the superintendents lived elsewhere, communication by rail being easy. There were no pretty suburbs ; and though there might be families with century-old pedigrees, they had not assumed the divine right of grandeur.

Winchester had been away all day. Olmstead had taken supper without him. He had gone upstairs now, and stretched himself out by the open window for a rest. Late in the afternoon Amos Pike had driven in for a few articles, and brought him a note from Miss Disbrowe. Miss Vasilis had a nervous fever, with some brain trouble, due mostly to overwork and an impoverished condition of the system. At present there was no danger. He could send for his friend at once.

Yet it was not so much of Pearl Disbrowe he was thinking now. The tall, shadowy figure had a more seductive grace, the brown eyes an indescribable light, the lips set in curves so sweet that the radiance of her smile was like a subtle, half-hidden sunshine. He had fancied out there in the old garden that Hollis Winchester might marry Miss Eastwood, and round out the suggestive romance. He knew now it would be an impossibility. No alchemy in the whole repertory of nature could fuse these two souls. A certain high delicacy in her would forever keep such a man at

a distance. In spite of his friendliness, for he had come to like Winchester in many respects, he was exultantly glad.

He was dozing off, his mental vision taking in Chester House, when a firm step came up the stairs. In another moment Winchester had marched through, rather flushed and excited, with a paper in his hand.

"See here!" he began brusquely, pointing to a paragraph. "Read this!"

"Yes," Olmstead returned, as his eye caught the headlines, "I stumbled over that in New York yesterday, at the office of a friend."

"They have kept wonderfully close about it. Why, they have bought up nearly all Long Meadow! Some one, it seems, found a bed of clay, and there is a plan for brickmaking. The Trenfords are to take their big establishment out of the city. The town will be built up in a night." He gave a harsh laugh. "A spur of the road is planned for their accommodation."

"It doesn't take long to accomplish such things when men take hold in earnest."

"Long Meadow joins Chester House Farm." There was a desperate sort of bitterness in Winchester's tone.

"Yes," answered Olmstead briefly.

"They will make a bid for it. She will take it, of course."

"Why 'of course'?"

"They will offer a big price, and money always tempts a woman."

"As it never does a man," said Olmstead, with the good-nature in his voice that one could tell was born of a half-smile.

"Well, a man looks farther on, considers the future. I don't mind telling you, Olmstead, that I have had some curious dreams about the place. I should have begun quite differently years ago. When my great-uncle married, he begged my grandfather to bring his mill here, and my father thought it a good thing. It was supposed Brentford might rival some of the greater cities, I believe. Well, it hasn't. It has filled up with the dregs of emigration. Every year it gets worse. I think now that my father was crazy to buy the old factory and give twice what it was worth; but he was established here, and just then it was swell times, and he had a belief that the other claim would turn out to be a fraud. Then business dropped down, and he had hard work to weather the storm, but he did. If he had merely leased the factory for a term of years, I should have thrown it up and gone off to some wholesomer, cleaner place. I have driven over that tract time and again, and thought of the fine site, gloated over it! If I could have bought Chester House

when this girl came of age, I'd have moved heaven and earth, formed a syndicate, done anything to compass my dream. So I've kept it to myself. But no man seems to have a monopoly of ideas. And now the thing is done, and I am not in it at all."

The lingering undercurrent in his voice would have been a tremble had he held himself less rigorously in hand. The repressed emotion touched Olmstead keenly.

"Why don't you make her another offer for it, Winchester?"

He laughed contemptuously, with a touch of cruel discordance.

"You have been there," he resumed, after a long pause; "what kind of a fad is it? She may donate a Home for Incapables to the new town. The Eastwood Home. Has she taken orders?"

"She has very little to do with it. I wish you really knew Miss Disbrowe. Many of her ideas would suit you to a dot. She isn't weakly or sentimentally charitable. She believes in helping people to help themselves, and thinks the truest kindness one can do a fellow-creature, man or woman, is to put them in a way of self-support. This is the kind of home to which any lady might invite a friend, rich or poor."

"No, Miss Eastwood isn't the kind to shoulder such an enterprise. She might give the house away; she wouldn't go round in the slums to find people to fill it. She must have taken her style from the Eastwood side. You have seen her playing at charity. I haven't any doubt but that she was superlatively graceful! Well, I have seen her as one of the stars of society. She has the Vere-de-Vere manner. Do they all fall on their knees when she raises her hand?"

"Winchester, you are positively cantankerous! You gibe alike at her, whether she affects society or the chosen gray of some sisterhood. You have managed to carry away a distorted idea of her, quite unfair. Both are charming young women. They have a man and a maid, a horse and a dog. The house and the garden still hold their quaint, beautiful seclusion. Why shouldn't these girls of leisure try to do a little uplifting in the world? Heaven knows there is need enough of it!"

"There is a deal of viciousness in this fashionable benevolence. The schemers come to depend on it, to demand it. Let them take their own money. Why, see here, Olmstead, I have not had a pleasure journey in years! I have had other things to take my time. Yet I am in a fair condition," with a sarcastic intonation.

"Maybe, if you lived in some of the filthy dens

where I've found even *your* people, Winchester, you would like a day or a week out, to see the real sky, where it isn't obscured by smoke, and long reaches of meadows, shady, fragrant woodlands, or a bit of the ocean. You have a roomy, comfortable home, good food, luxuries, reading, and some leisure; a day off, now and then, even if it is business journeys, variety, aims, and ambitions" —

"And I wonder how many of the men down yonder would have kept at it as I did! You have never had a big business on your hands, Olmstead, — orders to fill, and men turning sulky and going out on strikes; payments to meet, and some of the men you depended on giving you notice at the last moment they could not come to time. I have run things very light-handed now and then. I have spent whole nights down at the mill. And they grudge me success!"

"Did you ever think these people are largely what the methods of the past and to-day make them? When the conditions of life are not quite so hard, there is a general improvement, better health, less overcrowding. When you come to give a man a decent share of prosperity, you rouse ambition in him. Then you can appeal to him; but what appeal can you make to the denizens of saloons? And you employers have

not made much effort to provide better things. When you think of it, Winchester, isn't it a little unreasonable for you to expect a man to use his most eager and earnest efforts to help you to acquire a fortune?"

"But do you not see it is to his interest? The more employment there is, the less likely he is to be out of work. If I were content to make a bare living, fifty of my men would be idle to-morrow."

"But if depression in business sweeps over the land, are you going to spend your money to give work and bread?"

"Oh, men have done this," said Winchester in a tone of lofty indifference.

"All honor to them, then!"

"You clergymen theorize a good deal. If you had the hard, practical part on your hands" —

"We see the results. I do not think, Winchester, that we take upon ourselves any vow or duty to preach to men the advisability of laying up treasures here on earth. The Golden Rule may be visionary, but the eternal laws of justice are founded on it. The great question is how thoroughly or truly one believes in another life. He cannot take it for himself and be indifferent to his neighbor's welfare. He is his brother's keeper, whether he likes it or not. Even in this world his selfish indifference often reacts,

and he suffers from it. But if you think the piling up of money is the greatest good, if you are willing to concentrate every faculty of soul and body in that one pursuit, then grant us the same liberty. Let us pursue our ideal with a purpose as resolute. If we honestly believe we can better the world a little, if we have a message from the Master to deliver, shall we be less diligent in our spiritual things than you in your temporal work for that which you admit ends with life? If these two young girls choose to give up the gay world for a season, and make a bit of the greater 'King's Country' in the old house you love so well, depend upon it, no evil can grow out of it. Come over and see them. Perhaps you and Miss Eastwood can reach some basis of readjustment. Be first in the field with your offer. If she really knew" —

"She knows," he replied with a scornful inflection. "She is to carry out her mother's bitterness."

"But the law, you admit, proved her mother right. As I understand the case, the mistake was on your side. Yet I do not think the place has any tender associations for her."

What had happened between these two people? Not love — neither of them betrayed the slightest consciousness, of itself a subtle betrayal. Win-

chester's was a kind of vindictiveness toward the woman who had thwarted him; her's, a rather amused indifference. Winchester was an odd compound. He had some admirable qualities, but he was the kind of man who let nothing stand in his way when he had resolved upon his purpose.

The man suddenly turned on his heel, tramped down the stairs, paused to light a cigar, and then strode out on the country road. He could have gone on and quarrelled with Olmstead, but one thing the clergyman said struck home. He *had* a right to be in earnest with his work. He admired the sturdy common-sense Olmstead brought to the fore. Then, too, he knew he was here temporarily. Winchester was angry and disappointed. That other eyes had seen the possibility he had gloated over in secret, set him beside himself.

More than two years ago his plans had taken definite shape. He hated Brentford. Year after year a steady disgust had penetrated his whole being. His father had made a short-sighted mistake. He did not hold it against him with any sense of anger. It had seemed best then. A good deal of money and energy had been spent here, and if he went on, half the mill, at least, must be rebuilt. Labor disturbances were im-

pending. In a short time he intended to shut down for repairs.

He had meant to consider his best interests quite at his leisure; but these new plans roused him to white heat. If men of note came to Long Meadow, and a new, clean, convenient place was attractive, Brentford would be pushed to the wall, become a dead town, unless some earthquake shook it up and toppled it over the old ruins. While he had been straining every nerve to make money, and scheming to repossess Chester House, this plan had come into existence like a thief in the night, and he had no hand in it.

Already one of the large establishments had been taken out of the town. To rebuild would be absolutely throwing away money. And, curiously enough, this season, the old hope had awakened within him. He let nothing concerning Chester House escape him. If there should be some difficulty in renting it! The house was hardly up to the requirements of fashion. She really might desire to dispose of it, if not directly to him.

The episode of their brief acquaintance was not pleasant to remember. It was amazing to him, in the retrospect, that with his experience and judgment he should have ruined his cause. Any woman of pride would have done as she did. He

had no desire to meet Miss Eastwood. Yet the knowledge that Olmstead had a sort of vested right in Chester House filled him with secret mortification. He really knew so little about Miss Eastwood; in the hands of a scheming woman she might be induced to consent to any romantic charity.

How many times he had driven about the place, generally on Sunday morning! It was such a relief to get out in the clear, wide country, away from the sights and sounds of poverty, toil, and flaunting saloons! If one could start anew in a fresh, modern way, with large rooms, new machinery, and the pick of employees! If others came, it would not require many of the forces of to-day to build a new town.

And the dream slipped to the old ending. He was there with his children playing under the trees, their mother walking with them, holding a tiny hand in hers. He had no special ideals. There had not been much time in his busy life to think about women. Some one fair and gracious, with a subtle sweetness like the fragrance of a flower. He had never wasted his energies on flirtations; perhaps, if he had studied women a little more closely, he would have escaped his tremendous blunder.

How curious that a man's dearest wishes should

be so persistently frustrated! He *could* buy back Chester House; he was in better shape than two years ago. But if he should again sink a large sum in the mill!

Olmstead heard Winchester come in quite late. He had been asleep, but he could guess the man's ill-temper had not all abated. However, he was briefly cordial the next morning. Olmstead hurried down to the city for a conference with Marcia Golding, and found Ruth Searle an inmate of her hospitable little nest, which, for the sake of her divine Master, was always open to the cry of the needy.

"What a wonderful providence!" she cried with a smile. "And Miss Eastwood! I have been hearing about her as a society belle and an heiress. Are we converting the world to our faith and usages?"

"I don't know that she is converted really." He flushed a little as he said this, and was vexed with himself that he should do so without cause. "It is Miss Disbrowe who has the faith and works, and Miss Eastwood the money." He gave a short, conventional laugh, as if something was not yet well adjusted.

"Then it is a promising partnership. We are glad to have doing good fashionable, if it is not done by stealth. I do not see why it should be,

if it is not ostentatious. Shall we ever reach the millennium, when love to one's neighbor will simply cover the whole ground? What a conservation of the forces there will be, when you are not continually making up for the shortcomings of the other half of the world!"

"When every one helps, it will be the millennium," he returned. "But it is a long way off, I am afraid."

"We go forward in the Master's name. But for that we might be discouraged."

Miss Golding had reached middle life, even if one sets the limit at fourscore. She was a wise, sympathizing, and congenial friend to more than one like Parke Olmstead or Ruth Searle. Perhaps he never knew, and I am sure she did not, how much she had done towards shaping his present purposes. Her life had made her fair and attractive, with the larger graces of generous womanhood. She had been realizing and accepting her special gifts, and finding their purposes, and the gracious harmony looked out of her serene eyes.

"The very place for Ruth," she said presently, when they came back to her. "She has a certain shyness, born of continued repression and lack of appreciation. Her mother always treated her as a child about a dozen years of age, who

was in danger of being too forward. She wants to be brought out into the sunlight before she begins her real work. Of course Mrs. Congdon would have taken her; but it would have been a wretched life, unless some new lover, to Ruth's mind, had presented himself. I really don't know what the poor child can do, except to be a companion to some one, and I shall keep her in my mind. There will be some place for her. She would make an excellent nurse, but she has not the health to take the course of training. She wants a good long rest. I had meant to pay her board. Mrs. Congdon offered to assist her until she was settled. She has had hard times, perhaps more pinches than she would like to own. The straits of poverty do not always bring out what is best in one's nature. I think we all talk a little humbug about its ennobling influence."

Miss Golding smiled as she uttered this.

"Neither wealth nor poverty," quoted Olmstead.

Miss Searle came in presently. She was still pale and thin from her illness, careworn, and looking older than her two and thirty years should have demanded. Perhaps that bitter portion, hard to be borne, coldness and neglect where one might justly have expected kindlier regard, had also left an impress; but friends were being

raised up, and already she felt in some degree comforted. She was to begin life anew.

It was quite in the afternoon when they reached Sandon, and drove over to Chester House. Olmstead felt strangely impatient to know how it had fared with them all.

Miss Disbrowe took charge of her newcomer, after explaining that Miss Vasilis had some phase of nervous fever, not really critical, the result of exhaustion. Miss Barclay was not so well, and had kept her room to-day.

Then she left him with Miss Eastwood, who was reclining in the hammock, drowsing over a volume of poems. He takes the seat at the head, the high-back willow chair, and Miss Eastwood makes no pretence at rising. To-day she has had some slight longings for society and admiration, and she begins to question if several weeks of this will not pall upon her.

He picks up the book, still warm with the touch of her hand. It is the Arthurian Idyls. He turns the leaves over idly; then one of his favorite passages enchains his eye, and in his rich, manly voice reads aloud, until the fragrant air seems to throb with a subtle melody. Sabrina Eastwood listens, and a vague satisfaction softly thrills every pulse of her being.

CHAPTER IX

OUR ACTS OUR ANGELS ARE FOR GOOD OR ILL

HOLLIS WINCHESTER put up the new schedule of wages one evening after the men had gone. He had waited to get a large order off safely. There was one more, then the others could lay over a while. He knew very well what the result would be, but he would throw the onus of the shutting down on the men.

To-day he had seen the plans of the new town. Work was to begin at once on the grading and the cutting up of the property. It was a greater scheme than he had imagined at first. The syndicate had some large capitalists in it. What if he should throw up everything here, get rid of it as well as he could, and take a new start? That he would be cordially welcomed he knew.

For several days he had been critically inspecting the old part of the mill. It had been braced up, patched up, but for the last year had not been safe. In passing through he had seen the great

beams sway a little. Was he really jeopardizing the lives of his employees?

He gave a harsh, short sound like a sneer. It had not been as bad as this when it was braced the last time. There could be no question now of repairs. It had to come down, and he must make his choice. For the last ten days his blood had been at fever heat. The men had suffered from his temper, and were in no mood to accept any added burden, even if the choice were theirs.

Suddenly a curious mood of depression fell upon him. What was it all worth? He had striven as only a man with health, energy, a settled will, and an indomitable purpose can strive. Twenty more years of good fortune and he could defy the world, dictate to it, as he had seen other men. But in the meantime, what?

Shoving the papers roughly back in the desk, he snapped the lock, strode to the door, then gave one look down the long, shadowy factory that seemed tenanted by some huge demon. It was still enough now. It was not racking the building in any death throe. What if it did some day? A week longer — that was all. Nothing would happen in that time.

He stepped out-of-doors. The yard was full of *débris* of every kind, festering in the sun by day, exhaling noisome odors by night. It could be

made more wholesome, he knew. Water oozed over the stone-paved gutter, leaving a track of greenish mould at its edges, and a young moon gave a faint, silvery light, just enough to reveal its vileness. Such men as Olmstead inveighed sharply about these things. Were they not more than half right?

He stepped out into the street. He had to go two or three squares through the thickly populated tenement district. Families crowded in because rents were low, and it was handy to the shops. Handy to the saloons as well. There were some in full blast, with reddish lights, noisy songs, loud talk, and fumes of beer. The night was hot. The children were running about, quarrelling, shouting, fighting. Women sat on the stoops with babies in their arms, gossiping or singing street songs. He was seldom here on a summer night. How intolerable it was! He was so glad to get past it all.

"If their wages did not average half a dollar a day, they would spend part of that for drink," he said angrily to himself. "And the more they have, the more they are able to spend." This had been a strong argument with him when he wanted to justify himself.

He could not get the sound out of his ears, and the smell seemed to reach even here among the

gardens. Olmstead was on the step of the old porch, talking to Mrs. Kent and Calista Spence, who, in her way, was a character, a good woman of extremely narrow limitations.

"You are to go out in the highways and the hedges, and compel them to come in," Olmstead was saying. "A mere general invitation won't answer for them. They are to be saved against their own desires, if such a thing is possible. We wonder why they do not accept eagerly. But there are many, besides, who insist upon being a law unto themselves."

That was what he had been, "a law unto himself," Winchester thought as he went up-stairs. He threw himself into a chair by the open window. He had been sufficient for himself also, but to-night he felt the most solitary creature in the universe. He had plenty of business friends. He was asked out to men's dinners and club suppers, though he seldom went.

At one time he had gone a little among the better class at Brentford, but they seemed narrow and vapid. He hated second-rate girls, with their cheap, showy accomplishments and their eagerness to attract attention. He had dropped insensibly into unsocial ways, and a book had become his best friend. Curiously enough, Olmstead had stirred him unwittingly—his forcible, vigorous

talk, that never trenched on absolute personalities, but enunciated truths clearly, leaving his hearer to apply them, carried a touch of conviction one could not lightly dismiss. He had sneered a little in the beginning, but soon learned that Olmstead was no raw recruit, whose enthusiasm would outrun his judgment. He had deliberately chosen this work, while other paths were open before him, and he was not dependent on it for a livelihood. He was well read; he had gone exhaustively over both sides of the question. Cavil as Winchester might, he could not help honoring a man whose belief interpenetrated every secret spring of his being, who made his own life conform to it.

He suspected that it was through Olmstead's generosity the Reverend Maurice Lovett had been able to indulge in this vacation. He had worked hard for half a dozen years; he had buried his wife and little son the preceding summer. They had fallen victims to a low fever that had prevailed, largely due to bad drainage and the indifference of town authorities. He remembered how energetic Mr. Lovett had been in all the earlier years. Did well-intentioned but indifferent people often stand in the way of the improvement of the race?

There were times when Olmstead made him feel how much he was losing, and how he narrowed his own life. But what could he do here,

unless he took the redemption of Brentford on his shoulders! He was not a born philanthropist. Yet occasionally he questioned in quite a new way when some tired, haggard, discontented face glowered at him. If he paid the market rate in wages, what else could be asked of him? To be sure, men like Olmstead thought you had duties.

How could the man stay down-stairs chattering with those commonplace women! Was religion your great leveler? He wanted to talk over Long Meadows. That was real, vital, promising. He was in a mood, too, to ask a little advice about going thither. Somewhere in the talk he might learn whether Miss Eastwood had been approached with any special offer. He had thought of a few delicate entering wedges that he could skilfully use. He would like to begin over again, and the present seemed to be the propitious season.

Now and then a sentence floated up to him, mostly in Calista Spence's rather emphatic tone. It was about the "Lord's work," as she termed it. He was almost sure something had been said concerning Chester House and the romantic scheme that of late had engrossed Olmstead a good deal, since he had brought a friend to share its benefits. How he would like to sweep them all away!

The women came in, and there was a gentle kind of household confusion attending the prepa-

rations for night. He waited impatiently for the springy tread that came up two steps at a time. He half resolved to go down and share the dewy coolness, then something between pride and obstinacy held him back.

Olmstead sat on the step, leaning against the square post that supported the porch roof. He had been talking over some of Miss Disbrowe's good works. Since Miss Searle came he felt he really had an interest in the household. There had been a few anxieties, and they had turned naturally to him.

In spite of the unlooked-for relief, a shadow was looming up softly, just as some faint gray cloud rises in the summer sky, slowly but surely. Miss Barclay's improvement, at first, brought hope to Mrs. Duane, who, in the delightful sense of pecuniary ease, dared to look at the future; but the invalid felt herself growing a little weaker every day. She spent more time on the sofa, and the drives were shortened. She listened cheerfully to suggestions of what they would do the coming winter, and smiled assent. Since God had granted so great a joy, relieving her of all fear of Esther's future from want or loneliness, she was ready to go at his bidding. If the child could have lived, the daughter grown to womanhood now in that fairer land! Since the day of the for-

tune Mrs. Duane had referred to her more than once, with the yearning of motherhood. This afternoon she had confided her thought to Parke Olmstead.

"You see," she said, "it is best that I go first. I have already passed the Psalmist's limit, so why should I complain? I had ten years of prosperity, love, delight, and care before she came; it is but fair that after all these years she should have 'beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning.' Might I ask you, who have been so thoughtful already, to comfort her when the blow falls, to advise in any strait? Miss Disbrowe will never fail her; but it is not wise to burden one whose usefulness takes such a broad scope. You can never know what this shelter, this tenderness, has been to both of us! Surely we have found our way into the 'King's Country' while yet here in the flesh. How sad for those who have no glimpse of the promised land to refresh the tired eyes that have looked so long on the arid desert!"

Together the two took sweet counsel, by the very river side, as it were. She was quite ready to cross over. Olmstead wondered at the gracious resignation to all that had befallen her, the trials that had come of man's evil doing and selfishness.

The carriage came slowly up the drive. Pearl Disbrowe leaned out and nodded, Miss Searle be-

side her, much improved in this brief while; Mrs. Duane was on the back seat, with peculiar, dark, little Miss Vasilis holding her hand with a kind of passionate eagerness that touched Olmstead curiously. He had not seen her since the night he brought her home. He had been much interested in the case. While it had never reached the point of absolute danger, it was the result of passionate longing that had overwhelmed the worn nerves and exhausted body.

She colored vividly as Olmstead lifted her down and carried her to the porch. Mrs. Duane paused to greet her sister and ask a question or two, then drew the girl's small hand through her arm, leading her up-stairs, while the others paused for a few words. Miss Eastwood was coming down, and smiled upon them.

"You must lie down at once," Mrs. Duane said gently, as they reached Rhea's room. "You are still weak." She took her hat and wrap, and arranged the pillows.

"You are so comforting," the girl said, clasping her arms about the elder woman. "One never feels afraid with you. They are all good and kind, but there's something — perhaps it is because you have been down in the depths of poverty. And I almost envied you your good fortune! Oh, can you forgive me? That night I thought there was

nothing for me to do but just go back while I had the strength, or die on the way—it mattered very little.”

“Hush, my poor child! Think how many years my sister and I waited. There, you must not talk or cry, but rest a little while. I think God has something in store for you.”

She kissed the throbbing lips, the wet cheeks, and gently impelled her to the bed.

“I will come up again presently,” she said in a tender, comforting tone.

Out on the landing she paused. Something had flashed over her like a revelation, a joy that would fill her soul, a work for her hands to do. Would any one think it a wild scheme? Would Margaret? What if there came a day when she did not have her sister? She was not young as these girls, with their long futures before them. Even Miss Searle could start afresh with tolerable confidence. She would go to her child. But what if she passed heaven’s gate with one rescued from the evil in the world, and said, “Here am I and the children Thou hast given me?”

She went down in a maze of half-thought, half-thrilling resolve. Some one of her own again, to cherish her declining years. Would it be possible! She glanced at her sister, sitting with her eyes closed. Would she feel ever so slightly

crowded out? Miss Eastwood and Olmstead were sauntering down by the roadside fence under the waving branches. He would be able to decide if there was too much selfish pleasure in the sudden plan for one of the "least of these."

He had glanced up and smiled as Miss Eastwood came out on the porch. There was a wistful entreaty in her face which moved him deeply. She walked with him to the gate.

"I want some — advice, I think it is. In this idyllic Eden there seem no sins or temptations to confess, so we burden you with our indecisions," and she smiled.

Was it aught concerning Chester House?

"You were out at Long Meadows this morning?" he began.

"Yes; Pearl and I. We indulged in a sentiment of regret as we glanced over the smiling fields. You have heard all the plans of the new town, I dare say?"

Olmstead nodded.

"Womanlike, we bewailed the change."

"Well?" breaking her long pause.

"One can see the other side," and a serious expression crossed her face. "How dreary those long stretches of stubble must look in the winter! And the houses are falling to decay. The farmers grumble that nothing pays any more. Most of

them are glad enough to sell out at what seems a fortune to them. From the purely pastoral side it is sad to contemplate. The farmers are vapid and listless, obstinate, trying yet to achieve success with their grandfathers' methods. The women sit in-doors, running a sewing-machine, doing 'shop-work' for the larger centres at prices that must starve out their sisters in the cities. This is Pearl's wisdom and discrimination," smiling. "She would have them raising chickens and berries and flowers. After all, a town of the larger industries may not prove detrimental. But I did not mean to air my newly acquired lore. You will soon discern the incompleteness of it."

Whatever she said had a subtle fascination for Olmstead. He glanced up from the patch of daisies and clover at his feet. He wanted to ask about Chester House Farm; but she began again, to his surprise:—

"It is Miss Vasilis I want to discuss. I have never gone very deeply into the study of humanity. I understand some people, those I have been generally accustomed to, and one gets vague ideas of the rest, —a very few of the rest, I suppose? I don't think I was at all drawn to Miss Vasilis at first. I had never met one like her in a familiar manner. I couldn't tell whether anything pleased her or not. Sometimes she was almost

stolid. But there was a curious smouldering fire underneath that flared up one night. It was like a bit out of a poem. She was really ill, though I suppose one rarely reaches such conclusions in any sort of healthy state. I was afraid she was going to turn out an ingrate on Pearl's hands."

"No, not that," he replied protestingly.

"If she had been a little stronger she would have gone off, and we should never have imagined how the poor starved soul was hungering for something she had never known, and was vaguely dreaming of in a confused fashion. She has some gifts that amount to almost genius. Pearl has discovered them. She has made wonderful sketches, not merely conventional designs for work, but absolute pictures, with a haunting weirdness. Just lately we have learned that she has a voice out of the common order. I thought her very plain at first; but this morning she sat by the piano while I was playing, and was transfigured."

He had never seen Miss Eastwood so roused. She raised her eyes with a straight, steady, though troubled look, and the level brows were drawn close together.

"I have seen very little of her," he said.

"But you have seen others. You have had occasion to judge. There is a good deal of talk about taking people out of their proper sphere

unwisely. I think in the circle in which I have moved there is a kind of caste distinction — though no one would really confess it — that says, let all these people stay in their own walk in life. But what if some untoward accident thrusts them down? Why, Miss Barclay has cousins in New York who are leaders of society! That miserable shelter from which Pearl rescued her was not *her* proper place."

She warmed with enthusiasm that made her startling, fascinating, in that she was utterly unconscious of it.

"All these things, my dear Miss Eastwood, come in the great questions of philanthropy, which, in its truest sense, is Christianity. 'He hath made of one blood all nations.' And as each nation, each community, comes into that larger intelligence taught by the Golden Rule, we shall not inquire what was this man's place a hundred years back, and relegate him to it, but hold out help to enable him to rise. We shall desire to bring him into that larger liberty which makes all free, which, if it cannot make all equal, at least gives every one a chance to do his best."

Olmstead sighed. The time seemed very far distant.

"It is rather inconsistent, isn't it, to praise and admire one who has risen from obscurity, and say

to the next one, 'Keep in the place where you belong'? I have been thinking of that seriously. I have been thinking of a great many new subjects," and the lines came back in her brow. "You see, Miss Disbrowe has not been hedged about with dogmatism and conventionalism. She goes so straight to her good work, that her strength and purity ennoble it. But I see some of the dangers on the other side, and hesitate."

Her voice dropped to an almost pathetic tone.

"Well," as she paused with a perplexing thought, "what is the puzzle? Can I help you?"

She glanced at him with grave eyes.

"Here is this girl," she said presently. "She has a passionate, sensitive temperament. A month ago to have shelter, food, and a few common pleasures sufficed. She made no protest against working for them. Well, if that was her place in the economy of life she should have had strength enough to go on. And there are hundreds of them, Pearl says, dropping out by the wayside, hurried off to hospitals and pauper graves. It is horrible! Where one is willing to work" —

Sabrina Eastwood shuddered, and her face was white with feeling.

"Now," she resumed, "the child, for sometimes

she seems not more than a dozen years old, has great capacity. But what if the educational process should develop her in an 'unwise fashion? What if one should mar instead of mending?"

"You have been thinking of mending?"

She was so engrossed that she hardly noted the eyes studying her with a sudden delight.

"One could educate her. Even now it would be much harder for her to go back to the old life of wearing toil, than that night when she picked up her little bundle and went out in the darkness, a solitary, pathetic figure, because it seemed to her she had no part nor lot with such lives as ours. In a certain way she was heroic. Pearl would keep watch of her, I know, and I could defray her expenses; it would really cost little, — three or four hundred dollars a year for a school. Should we spoil her between us? Would we meddle and mar? Would we be likely to unfit her for the real work of life?"

"No, I think not, with your pure ideals and earnestness."

"But she could not remain with us. And if some untoward influence crossed her path?"

"Let me think," he said; "I cannot decide just now. I would like to see more of her. And Miss Disbrowe" —

"The expense of it must be my part. Pearl

has many things on hand. You must make her understand that when you discuss the matter with her."

Miss Eastwood turned and held out her hand. He took it reverently as he said good-by, and walked slowly down the shaded road.

There was a little turn, and in the dense shadow of the pines stood Mrs. Duane. She had come through the garden and waited for him.

"You will pardon me," she said in her soft voice, "but I wanted some counsel."

He smiled, and it reassured her.

"You were with my sister a long while this afternoon?"

Olmstead started at that.

"O Mr. Olmstead!" she cried, "you may all think me blind, but I am not. At first I said I could not bear any sorrow to shadow our new joy. I wanted years of comfort and pleasure with her. But"—

"Do not look too far into the future. His grace will be sufficient."

"I do not look at the end." Her voice trembled perceptibly. "It was about another matter I wanted your advice. It came to me suddenly—a great joy—then I wondered if it was wise. For years we have been all to each other. A

new affection could not change the old love. And afterward — it would be such a comfort. Yet it seems wild ” —

He glanced at her in vague amazement.

“It is Miss Vasilis,” she went on hurriedly. “She has no one, no home, and her future is uncertain. I love her. Will it be rash in me to take her for my very own? Will it pain sister, do you think?” she asked with feverish eagerness. “For I would put by my own wishes and wait.”

He was touched by the delicate consideration of love.

“No,” he answered; “I think it will comfort her.”

“I love this young girl. And since I have been blest, I must in turn do some good work for very gratitude. She is weakly, and though I have discerned certain attractions in her, the world may not. I cannot give her wealth, but I can provide for her comfort. You think I may?”

“God will bless your good work.” He pressed the small, thin hand fervently.

Now he sat in the quiet starlight musing, not only of the future of Miss Vasilis, but of another form which swept through his dreams.

CHAPTER X

AND LIFE BE PROOF OF THIS

SABRINA EASTWOOD smiled softly to herself as she sat at the breakfast-table the next morning. She was studying Rhea Vasilis with a new interest, thinking over the strange episode of the night not so long ago. The girl had never been alarmingly ill; weak, and wandering in her mind, but for the most part quiet. Miss Searle had done the greater share of the nursing.

"Let her sleep all she can," said the good old doctor. "She's simply worn out. Queer, isn't it, that some are compelled to wear themselves out for bread, and others wear themselves out in a frantic chase for pleasure. Between, there's a grand, satisfying life. I think you have touched the edge of the great work awaiting willing hands."

Rhea had opened her eyes on defined consciousness one day. Ruth Searle sat beside her with some trifle of sewing. Where was she? Slowly the fragments pieced themselves together.

Had she really stolen away in the night, wild and wretched with possibilities not for her?

Mrs. Duane came in and said something gently to the stranger sitting there. She took up the thin hand caressingly ; she bent over and kissed the cool, smooth brow.

"The doctor says she is much better, that she will soon be around. Poor little child ! How dreary her life must have been ! And when you think how many there are ! But hers will be better. My poor little dear !" and she kissed her again.

The tears beaded the long lashes, though the eyes did not open. But the arms clasped about Mrs. Duane's neck as if they would never loosen again.

Two days after Rhea said to Miss Disbrowe : "You must think me horribly ungrateful ! I can never make you understand. It was not because any one said or did anything that hurt me. It was all so beautiful that sometimes I wanted to die in the very midst of it. O Miss Disbrowe, the pain is in going back to the privations and poverty and awful loneliness ! I wouldn't have minded it if I had stayed well, even as well as I was when I first went to the Art Rooms, though then I had hard headaches. And when a break comes, it makes you feel so afraid. If I couldn't work steady I should lose my place. And when my

eyes troubled me so" — she paused, and drew a long, sobbing breath.

"When you asked me to come here, I thought I should find some other kind of work to do for a while. I had a feeling that I didn't want to live on charity. I knew of girls who had gone out in country places for a week or two. But all the while I was thinking how it would be in the autumn when you went away, if I did not get well and strong. Every day some new feeling came to me, and, if you can understand, I enjoyed it more and more,—the beautiful furniture and all, the large, clean rooms, and such meals and fruit, everything looking like a picture; and Miss Eastwood in her lovely dresses, the music, the talk about so many wonderful things! I wanted to be a real part of it, to read and sing and paint pictures,—and the strange thing was that I felt I could do it all if I had the chance. I had never dreamed of such things before. Then the old life looked more and more wretched, and I shrank from it. When Mrs. Duane came home with the news that her good fortune was true, it seemed as if nothing good would ever happen to me; that I was being pushed down; that I didn't belong anywhere."

"You belong to us. You belonged to us then, only you didn't understand it. You were worn

out and ill. And you are never to go back to that old life," said Miss Disbrowe.

"It isn't the work. I don't complain of that. I was proud of it, especially when they let me design a little. It was the dreadful living — when you lie awake and hear people fighting and quarrelling in the next room ; when some pretty girl you have really admired is taken off some day as a thief, or goes to concert saloons, and then to the bad ; when there is horrible swearing and foul talk all around you, and you can't live in any better place because it costs too much, and the people in nice houses won't have you. Yet it seems to me that some one might pick out the clean and decent people, and give them a chance. It is just what you are doing, I know ; but there are so many of them ! And somehow, thinking it all over, I seemed to go wrong myself, as if I couldn't stay and enjoy the love and delight and happiness when I had no real share in it."

She broke down then in passionate sobbing. Pearl Disbrowe soothed, comforted, brought the starved, longing, fettered soul out to the highway of hope and trust, paths in which it had never walked before. But not all at once would the grim phantoms of the past be banished.

When she came down among them again, shyly and with great humility, they all strove to add to

her comfort with the sweet grace of a higher understanding of her needs. Not with any officious patronizing; that was not Pearl's way. Miss Eastwood was curiously interested. Something in the fine, passionate responsiveness of the girl, when she really allowed any influence to sway her, moved the elder profoundly. Suggestions of possibilities flashing out that one could not help wondering at.

She could understand that a girl like Stacy Delamater might be worth helping to something higher. Was there anything Stacy really desired? She had never thought of that before. But this waif of a region so near the slums, with no parents one could respect, even if poverty was not taken into account, would she be worth raising to those heights outlined by education, and would she step upward to a finer atmosphere? Her training had been to let these people alone, except as you placed money in the hands of committees and associations who could sift and winnow rigorously.

To be sure, there was the whole summer before them, and one could tell better presently what efforts the girl would be worth. That Pearl meant to do something for her advancement she understood, — Pearl, with her small income and wisely generous heart. Why should not she? Yet she could not take her into her own life. There were schools and other methods.

Her talk with Mr. Olmstead had nearly decided her. She watched Rhea narrowly. Yes, there was an innate grace about the girl, a certain adaptiveness, a quick brain that caught at usages, that kept her from awkwardness even when she was abrupt. She would always be lame; but there was a touch of the unusual in her face that lifted her above any common prettiness. The large, dark eyes that could meet you with wistfulness, and yet turn cold and irresponsible; the small, fine features that might be haughty under society training; the olive skin that might be made to bloom with a touch of roses. Yes, she would be piquant. And if she evinced some genius! Nowadays, to have some peculiar gift above mediocrity was a passport to the world's approbation. She, Sabrina, cared little for it. It had been offered to her so readily. It was a tribute generally paid to wealth, and beauty sufficient to distinguish one.

Yes, she could supplement Pearl's endeavor. She put it that way, but she intended the real expense should be hers. They would take counsel together. Whatever was best for Rhea Vasilis —

Pearl had to go in to Brentford. Sabrina played a while, soft, low chords, improvising, as she often did when she was moved by any new or strange feeling. Then some visitors came — the agent of the syndicate, to bespeak an option on Chester

Farm, if Miss Eastwood felt disposed to sell. And Aunt Vantine had written "to her ungrateful girl" that her guardian had disposed of some railroad securities at a great advance, as just then there was a rather short-sighted "boom" in the road, fortunate for him and her. She should be back late in August, and they would take a season at some stylish resort, "if you are not absolutely dead of *ennui* by that time," she added.

She glanced around, standing there on the porch, and a thought of Hollis Winchester crossed her mind. She knew now that in a way he and Mr. Olmstead were friends. Did Winchester still care for the place, she wondered. There were no legal restrictions on its sale. Her mother had protested against its going back to the parties who had opposed her claim, and she had refused him sharply because he had angered her. But was life to be marred and narrowed by petty spites and jealousies and cross purposes? Some new feeling moved and softened her inmost soul.

Mrs. Duane and her sister were sitting under the old pine-trees. Yes, that was Miss Vasilis who suddenly raised her head and clasped her hands with a fervor that rendered her startling. Sabrina walked slowly down to them, her soft silk morning gown trailing over the short grass and beds of pine and hemlock needles. She drew in

long breaths of the fragrant air, and was deeply stirred by a new emotion, a new purpose.

Mrs. Duane glanced up with her appealing smile, and made a little gesture of welcome with her hand. A new expression, pervading every line of her face, held Sabrina's attention. Was this the despairing little woman she had gone to visit with Pearl a few weeks ago in that dingy room, in the hard grasp of pinching poverty? All the old knowledge and sweetness, laid away because belonging to another life, as one does a bit of fine lace or rare china when there are only common uses, was being brought out again with the subtle daintiness that we claim as belonging to birth and culture. Something more, that Sabrina could not translate in a moment, but that set her very soul wondering. For the same light was shining in the face of the girl who sat on the dry grass at her feet, and was leaning her arms softly on Mrs. Duane's knee, as if there was something too precious about the elder woman to be rudely approached. Rhea had been crying too; her long lashes were still beaded with tears.

Sabrina crossed over to Miss Barclay, and stood at the head of the reclining chair. This wan face had in it a certain exquisite peace.

"Our pretty parlor is not hospitably furnished as to chairs," began Mrs. Duane apologetically,

"but you are most welcome. My dear Miss Eastwood, perhaps you will never know all the joy and delight you and Miss Disbrowe have brought about, since human eyes cannot read to the far end, and, indeed, miss many little links. You have made possible one of the dearest desires of my life. I have found here, not my own lost child, but another God has sent in its place. And this poor solitary girl, looking at the future with eyes of desperate loneliness, with no human tie to comfort in life's dreary hours, has entered my heart and found a resting-place. We wanted each other, you see; she needed the mother, and I the child. We take each other for the years to come."

Mrs. Duane's voice faltered. Rhea hid her face.

"It is the good seed bringing forth fruit an hundred-fold," said Miss Barclay. "You two girls are sowing it. You have made this little harvest possible. In the course of nature I am likely to go before Esther. I shall have the comfort of knowing she has some interest to cheer her declining years; perhaps fond hands to tend, and loving eyes to watch over her, as she has watched over me."

"You mean" — then Sabrina Eastwood paused. She had been weighing and balancing and judging. It had been merely a question of money with her, — the surplus she did not need. She had not counted in love. An entertainment and

interest at the most, as she had looked upon it; and these women had given of their best and holiest, nothing doubting. They purposed to share their small fortune with a stranger, whose greatest appeal to them would be her need.

"I mean that she is to be my child," and Mrs. Duane laid her hand caressingly on the mass of soft dark hair that hid the tear-wet face. "Margaret and I talked it over this morning. I don't know when I first thought of it, but it seemed to take definite shape yesterday. Perhaps we both found what the sort of regard was that the Lord had sent to comfort our longing souls, the knowledge of what we could be to each other. And when the Lord had blessed me so abundantly — you see, Miss Eastwood, it isn't even as if we were young women. There is enough for the years left us. We do not need to be laying it up against the future; and we must work while it is day. There is so much to be done. Though it does not seem as if I ought to call it work when it is such a delight to me."

Mrs. Duane glanced up at the tall, fair girl with a smile of exquisite content, though there was a dewiness about her eyes.

"My child," she said again caressing Rhea.

Sabrina Eastwood stood there in a vague, conscience-stricken fashion. On these paltry thou-

sands Mrs. Duane considered herself abundantly blessed! Just now she had had almost that sum added to her store with one little turn of fortune's wheel. What grand sort of love was it that made human hearts go out to one another, that made blind eyes see, and slow brains resolve? A divine fire that had not touched her as yet.

She experienced a strange sense of loss. The work taken out of her hands deepened in interest.

Rhea Vasilis suddenly raised her head, and faced them with her flushed face and humid eyes. Then she rose and stood beside Mrs. Duane, laying one arm about her neck.

"Oh!" she cried, "you don't know, you can never know, what this is to me. It seems as if I had gone into some strange, beautiful world that I had not even dreamed of a few months ago. How should I know there was a great, tender, loving heart waiting for me to come in and share such affection as you have offered? Oh, you must believe that I would lay down my very life for you! Well, that isn't much" — she smiled faintly through her tears. "Our lives in their poverty and barrenness would not be much of a sacrifice! But I will live for you. I will do my utmost. And it seems now as if there were many things I could do, as if your care and tenderness inspired me. There are so many aims and en-

deavors possible when one goes into a new world, when one finds love" —

She bent and kissed Mrs. Duane. Sabrina came around to her, took the other half-resisting hand in hers.

"We were all interested in your future," she said. "Miss Disbrowe had some plans, and I" — her voice faltered and lost itself.

"You have all been so good. There are so many poor souls besides me, — stunted and starved lives that never know any blessedness, that are so ignorant they hardly long for any uplifting. It isn't content, but awful dreariness. You will help some of them, I know, and gain their gratitude, when they come to realize what you have done. But they can't understand at once. It is so strange to be cared for without any return being demanded."

Miss Eastwood felt that Rhea Vasilis gently put her outside of all that had come to herself. A woman of the world could not have done it more delicately. Mrs. Duane would gather the first sweetness of gratitude, the finest devotion of a newly created love. It was right, of course, but she experienced a longing for the power of awakening such an interest.

"I seem like another person," Rhea Vasilis continued; and there was a little gesture of pride, glad to clothe itself with humility. "The world

looks so clear and sweet when love makes a sunshine, and to one who has had no such glimpses of brightness, it is almost heaven. I have often wondered whether there was any such place. It doesn't seem possible when it is all one big, confused struggle for bread—poor souls going out of life and coming in, and no one caring. But I believe it now, when human kindness can be so great, so tender. For how could that be rewarded except by God's love? Some greater power must have inspired your soul, dear Mrs. Duane, when it opened to take in a poor, homeless, despairing girl, whose way was dreary and tangled with doubts and fears. Why, it is a new world! And I must make a new, brave life of it for your sake."

Mrs. Duane raised her eyes with an intent, satisfying expression that made the faded face lovely. Rhea bent over and kissed it.

"I am very glad," Sabrina said. "Oh, you must not shut us out of a share in the future. Let us all help"—

Yet never had she felt more helpless. She was glad to see the carriage turning into the drive, glad to go down and meet Pearl, who was holding something in her hand and smiling.

"A letter from Aunt Jane," she cried. "She and Stacy are going to take us in on their way. Aunt Jane isn't at all sure but we are actually suf-

fering for some of the comforts of life," and Pearl laughed softly as she tossed it to her friend. Then she was startled a little at Sabrina's grave face. She caught sight of the three under the trees.

"Nothing has happened" —

Miss Eastwood smiled. "Nothing to be troubled about. A romance instead—the outcome of your kindly endeavors. Pearl, we shall soon have no one left on whom to expend our sympathies. One thing grows out of another, one soul takes in another, and you will have to go out in the highways and the hedges."

"You ambiguous girl!"

"I shall just rouse your curiosity, not satisfy it. Some one has a better right to tell you the story than I. Where have you left Miss Searle?"

"Mr. Olmstead had something for her to do, and will bring her out this afternoon."

"Go down under the pines and see Mrs. Duane. I will sit here and read the letter."

It was such a kindly epistle. Mrs. Herrick was filled with compunction lest she had unwittingly aided in placing a burden on her young friends, who ought, after all, to be out in the gay world, enjoying the summer. A dozen little motherly surmises had occurred to her, and now she was coming to see for herself. She shouldn't feel easy in her mind to go off jaunting unless she

really knew all about them. And she wanted to see Chester House, as well as Pearl's old ladies. The girls had mostly gone away, and Stacy seemed rather dull and drooping, and a little change would do her good.

Did everybody have some one to think of but just Sabrina Eastwood? She was almost on the verge of quarrelling with herself. How did people get into the very heart of things?

Desire White's dinner-bell was ringing. She always gave them ten minutes' grace. Not that there was any elaborate dressing for dinner. Sabrina had slipped into such ways of simplicity that sometimes she wondered how she would endure fashionable life again. She went slowly up-stairs—she would wait until the little group came in and settled themselves, and not face the sight of their exquisite joy. A book lay on the corner of the table with the familiar look of frequent using. She took it up, and it seemed to open of its own accord. There lay Parke Olmstead's card. And just above it the two lines she had halted at so long ago:—

“I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,
Given up myself so many times.”

Would there ever come a time in which she would give up herself?

CHAPTER XI

THE LAW OF LOVE

MRS. HERRICK and Stacy wrought a curious change in the atmosphere of Chester House. There was about Mrs. Herrick the large, vital motherliness that one occasionally finds in women who have no children of their own; and one longs to place broods under their sheltering wings. She was everywhere; still she never impressed you as being officious. Desire smiled cheerfully when she came into the kitchen; Miss Barclay seemed revived with the out-giving strength, and even Miss Eastwood experienced the sort of rest and relief that had come to her in childhood. Her mother's influence had always been of the tense kind. She could relax under Mrs. Herrick's comforting smiles.

Rhea was perhaps the real heroine of the household. She just seemed to blossom, or perhaps it was more like the fern frond that had been in the brown, chilly earth, feeling within its tiny closed-up ball the longing for something it had never

seen or known, but when touched by the soft warmth of summer, arises and puts on its tender greenery, and reaches out for the bits and flecks of sunshine stealing through the trees. There was something touching in her love for Mrs. Duane. It made no demands, but was happiest in giving of its small but exhaustless store; as if she really could anticipate the wants of both women, and minister to the needs of one while she saved steps for the other.

"She is such a curious study," said Sabrina one morning. "I wonder if there are many like her down in those wretched depths? If so, it must be terrible for them to live on, pining for things they cannot even shape into real purposes, and, if they could, are unattainable."

"There is a dull sort of content with most of them. They would not take the trouble to pass the barrier. They like their own kind, their own enjoyments. To them a touch of physical comfort is all that is needed. Yet they could enjoy better homes, and in another generation ambition would be roused. But these other souls, who come gasping up to the surface, who beg you with pitiful eyes and wordless lips to save them from something they do not know themselves, a terror really worse than death, physical suffering, or lingering illness, are the ones greatly to be pitied."

"You saw this in her eyes, and you brought her out into a large place. How can you understand it, Pearl? And now, what is to be done with her? Mrs. Duane's little portion cannot provide an education for her. She has real gifts. She has an artist's soul. I am not sure that she could distinguish herself in the higher walks, perhaps, but she learns easily to see the grouping and effect. She ought to go to some good school before the cunning of her hand is betrayed into meretricious work. I had quite resolved to educate her myself. I was a little afraid that perhaps we had not really discovered a true genius, and that I might fill her head with false ambitions."

"She is learning her best lessons now in affection. There will be time for the other things. Let her be helpful and thoughtful to these two who have taken her so generously into their hearts. It is pretty to see her waiting upon them, reading to them, and listening to the experiences of half a century ago, with the wondering interest that is absolutely fascinating. The love and nearness will help Mrs. Duane to bear her sorrow the better when it comes."

Sabrina shuddered. Death seemed terrible to her.

"You think" — then she paused in great awe.

"The doctor feels quite assured now that Miss

Barclay will live till the early autumn. She is happy and comfortable here. O Sabrina, you ought never to think you are doing nothing! See what you have made possible!"

"And then this poor little woman with her few thousands does not hesitate to reach out to others, while I stand considering. It shames me. I cannot even take up the beginnings of things as Rhea does."

"But your beginnings will be different." Pearl smiled. "The work will come for you to do, never fear; willing hearts always find it. And Rhea may need you presently — as much as I. We are not all called to the same task. There were apostles to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles."

"The unbelieving Jews. I couldn't do anything with them, Pearl."

"Yet some of them listened, you remember."

Sabrina Eastwood let her eyes wander far over the meadow, on the other side of the road. There was a tiny gray house that had once been white, a dingy barn that had shone in glowing red years before; then a little rise of ground, a long, level stretch, and after that a small fishing hamlet and the Sound. They had driven over several times. A faint unfolding of mystery seemed as far away as that, and as sure. Was there any possibility about herself she had overlooked? An apostle to the Jews!

It came back to her in the afternoon. Stacy and Pearl sat in the hammock, idly swinging to and fro. Miss Searle was up-stairs, writing to her friend Marcia Golding. Mrs. Herrick had taken the others out driving. Sabrina was in-doors on the old brass-studded sofa, making a pretence at reading. The girls were not talking any secrets. Stacy was in that half-whimsical, half-grumbling mood that always amused Pearl.

“Yes, it’s been awfully stupid this summer. I never knew Wendover quite so dull. The young men go away, and Anstice — O Pearl, something just splendid happened to her! Some relatives asked her to spend the whole summer with them at Cape May. And the Berdans went off to Lake George; and there has just been a Sunday-school picnic now and then, and croquet — that isn’t much fun unless you have a nice party. In fact, it’s about relegated to the children; and after Professor Farrand went away — he stayed longer than usual; he had some writing to do for a friend, and then he was going to Spain. O Pearl, think of that! Last year he went to Norway and Sweden. What a great wide breath of living it must give one! I don’t wonder that men can talk of something besides turning carpets and making comfortables and dyeing your last winter’s gown, and how much preserve and pickle

you are going to put up this fall, and how long you have had your furniture, and what came down from grandmother, and all that. You see, if it was only told over once or twice, but year in and year out — I don't wonder girls like to do something, some kind of work that earns money, and then go off and take a blessed holiday and see strange things, — pictures you can call up afterwards without the real trouble of painting them, and odd people that you really wouldn't care about knowing, but you like to watch for all that. Anstice has been writing about those she meets, and it's better than books. Then to see for yourself! Yes, I wish I could earn some money of my own. I would almost go in one of the shops for a while."

"But Aunt Jane couldn't spare you."

"No, she really couldn't!" Stacy gave a long sigh. "I'm just like a child to her. I owe her more than a child's duty, because she really was not compelled to take me. And she couldn't get along with the work alone. But when I look on and on, with one year just like another — and the great beautiful world out beyond, all rich with mountains and lakes and waterfalls and magnificent cities, and the people going and coming" —

"And you may some day. You are only eighteen. By the time you are thirty you may have gone all around the world."

Stacy gave a short, doubtful laugh.

"Aunt Jane's much older than that, and she's never been anywhere to speak of, — Hartford and Springfield and Boston and Concord and New York. But she's never seen Niagara or the St. Lawrence or Canada, or even the White Mountains! And there's all the wonderful West. To be sure, she is happy and busy, and there's never been any real opportunity. When she was young, people didn't talk about such things, nor care about them. And it's been such a long while since she's gone anywhere! Aunt Matt will be so glad to see her. But I've half a mind to stay here with you. You've made the place like a story book with all these happenings. One wants to read the next chapter and the next. It's queer how you make romances out of everybody."

One of the neighboring farmers' wives had come up with some pot-cheese. Pearl begged her to sit down, while she took the carefully covered pan out to Desire. The woman fanned herself with her gingham sunbonnet, and said "it was a pow'rful hot day," and that "the men-folk would 'most melt in the medder." Stacy went on swinging slowly; Sabrina Eastwood dropped her book and was thinking.

An apostle to the near-by people, that was what Pearl had meant. Yes, even the Master

had not always gone out into the hedges and by-places. How strange she had never thought of it before — the day they were all talking at Wendover. She had not supposed Stacy needed anything besides a pretty new gown, and some books at Christmas, and a remembrance on her birthday ; and here was the young hungry soul waiting to be fed, who could be fed out of her abundance. And Aunt Jane ! It seemed to her that everybody must have seen Niagara as a matter of course. She had had a surfeit of great places, and was not yet tired of driving about the country roads and swinging in a hammock with a gown that would bear crushing.

To some people you gave bread. There was shelter, clothing, sympathy ; then came pleasure. Why had she been so blind to it all ? Why, the world was full of work, necessity, and delight ! The Lord had made the grass to grow and the green herb. He had made the flowers as well. There were the countless stars, the mountains and the seas, the works that praised him. And here was a longing soul she could delight. How had she been so slow to understand ?

When Pearl came back she found many things to say to Mrs. Slater. The woman answered in her phlegmatic fashion ; but the lines of her face relaxed, and she might have smiled if she had not

been so out of practice. The warmth of the impulse stirred her soul, and the bunch of flowers Pearl gathered and begged her to take home to the children was received with awkward gratitude.

"I'd rather granny had 'em, if it's all the same to you. We ain't much hands for posy gardenin'; there's too much work for such things, but granny — she'll be mighty pleased."

Yes, Pearl could always remember the cup of cold water.

After Aunt Jane had come home and laid aside her things and looked out that everybody was comfortable, Sabrina carried her off to her own room.

"I've something to ask of you, Aunt Jane," she said in her persuasive way, and put her hand out over the one that had toiled for so many years. "I want to take Stacy to Niagara, but two young girls couldn't well go alone. There must be some elder woman to care for them. And if you would! Then you could go on to your sister's afterward."

"My dear! And Niagara! An old woman like me!"

Sabrina smiled with a warmth and sweetness that went far toward rendering refusal impossible.

"But — well, I'd hardly know how to act!" Mrs. Herrick laughed, with a ring of positive pleasure in the mellow notes. "I dare say I'd be like

some of the women they laugh about in the papers; I'd bristle all over with exclamation points, and stand gaping about, until you'd be ashamed. But Stacy'd be just wild. The professor stayed a couple of weeks later than usual this summer, and he used to sit out on the stoop a while in the evenings and talk, and somehow he stirred Stacy all up telling of the wonderful places and countries he had seen. She's been kinder quiet and dumpy since, and reading over some of his books. It's a great, beautiful world, Miss Eastwood, but everybody doesn't get leave to travel all round it. I comfort myself with the thought that there'll be all heaven; and if God made the earth so wonderful, he isn't going to fail the poor souls who can never see more than their own little corner. There'll be rivers of delight and plains spread out in something more glorious than sunshine, and valleys and heights. And you'll have all eternity to see it. That isn't to say there's no need of enjoying what you can here. I ain't that narrow. And Stacy'll be just wild! I had half a mind to let her go off with some of the girls, but I didn't feel quite forehanded enough to fix her up nice and give her plenty to spend. Stacy's a good, sensible girl. But you two would be so pretty and nice that an old woman like me would most shame you."

She looked so entirely pleased with the compliment that had been paid her! It was almost as good as the journey.

"But pretty girls could not go alone, and nice girls would not." Sabrina smiled in her most persuasive fashion. "We must have you for the dignity and propriety. And I hoped you would like to go."

"Like to go! My dear child! Why, it would be a bit of heaven beforehand! You are as sweet as a rose to think of it. I don't know but you'll get to be like Pearl, planning out things for people."

"Thank you for that compliment," and a limpidness suffused Sabrina's eyes. "Now, you must let Stacy understand that you care to go, that it is not all on our account."

"O my dear, I haven't grown too old to hanker a little after the pleasures of the world that God made. If he'd put them way up to the North Pole, then we'd known for sure they were out of the reach of most people; but he lets folks live right around the Falls, and out West in those wonderful places, and all over Europe; so he means there shall not be any question. It's only whether people have the time and the money. And I've got to get a new carpet for one of the rooms—young fellows do scrape out things so."

"And I really owe you all this and more," cried Sabrina. "You weré so good to me" —

"That's nothing, child. No one could have been cross to such a delicate little mite as you used to be, never giving a bit of trouble. But you'll never know how good it was to see you come back, grown up into such a tall, pretty girl, and remembering little things that had been a'most crowded out of my mind."

Her voice broke a little, and she put her arms about Sabrina and kissed her. Women or girls rarely kissed Miss Eastwood. She always held herself aloof from effusiveness.

That very evening, as she was rambling about the old garden with Stacy, she laid the plan before her. These two girls had been curious, outside friends. Both felt a little afraid of the other. Stacy had rather a sharp, satiric tongue, and she had said to Aunt Jane, "she wasn't going to bow down to Miss Eastwood's money." She had her own dignity, and she was not the kind of a girl to be patronized. All the same, she secretly coveted about half the fortune. Half would make her "passing rich;" and more than once Sabrina had longed for Stacy's "good times," and the genuine love and admiration so frankly proffered. She had been so hedged about with conventionality, sheltered with a worldly wise wisdom, trained to

believe that money was the great thing to which the world paid honor, and that the class below you were ready to fawn and flatter, and that it was only your equals who were likely to have no ulterior motive. Yet she had more than once detected the humiliating truth even in them.

"Oh!" cried Stacy, with a touch of rapture in her voice, while her hands clasped eagerly. "Oh, would Aunt Jane go? You are very generous to think of it." Then she drew a long breath, and pride crept in.

"I'd almost decided to stay here with Pearl," she resumed in a tone of grave consideration. "I am so interested in Rhea Vasilis; and we have not been to the beach" —

Any other time Miss Eastwood would have answered with a cold, cutting dignity. It was hard to have one's kindly efforts thrust aside with such indifference, to endure the secret mortification of knowing she would have taken this gladly from Pearl. A sentence came to her that some one had been reading this morning, "To do good to them that despitely use you." This was hardly the flavor of spite, but Stacy's hasty independence.

"You could come back here, you know," she said with the indescribable gentleness that marks great effort over self.

"Yes, if Aunt Jane didn't need me. We will have to talk it over. It's so unexpected. But it is just lovely of you."

That was a little more like Stacy's natural self ; but if she had caught Sabrina's hand, if she had glanced with her bright eyes that could hold so much gratitude and delight, if her glad young voice had quivered just a little —

Miss Eastwood choked down something. Did she know of a girl in her own circle who wouldn't have just "jumped" at such an invitation ?

"I hope you and Aunt Jane will make it a lovely thing for me to remember," she said, with a graciousness that stung Stacy more keenly than any resentment could have done.

Then Stacy spoke of some of the girls who were going to Niagara this summer ; and they talked of the Lakes and Canada, and Professor Farrand's journey to Spain, until the stars came out and the dew began to fall. When they walked around they found Mr. Olmstead sitting on the step of the stoop, talking to Aunt Jane and Pearl. Stacy took the little nook by Aunt Jane. Sabrina seated herself in the hammock. The parlor lamp shone through the window, and threw up, in soft relief, the graceful reclining figure. Olmstead changed a little, so that he could keep a glimpse of her. Stacy remarked that.

When he had gone and the house was closed, they went up-stairs, saying pleasant good-nights to each other. Stacy fidgeted for a few moments, then said, "I must go and ask Pearl something," and scudded noiselessly across the hall.

Pearl was shaking out her long, soft hair, and smiled. Stacy shut the door quietly.

"Oh," she cried, "I do believe it was your plan!" and the eager eyes seemed to search into Miss Disbrowe's very thoughts.

"What was my plan?" Pearl smiled mirthfully.

"Niagara! You suggested that she should ask us. Confess!" Stacy held up her forefinger warningly.

"She—who? Not Sabrina? Be intelligible, Stacy."

Stacy's story came tumbling out. As she went on she grew more certain that Pearl was the prime mover, and was at first quite incredulous of her denial.

"But you would like to go? It's a delightful plan. Oh, you surely will, Stacy?"

Pearl's eyes were alight with eager persuasion.

"I don't know. I wish she had not asked it. I've always had a queer feeling about Miss Eastwood. I don't want her to think she can do anything for us, and we'll be glad to take it because

Stacy fixed her eyes on Pearl with a kind of surprised, questioning gravity.

"I like Sabrina very much. She has had the most fashionable training and life; but there's something very sweet down at the bottom of her soul, or she wouldn't cling so to Aunt Jane. And she is trying to find the way into more earnest living. People have said to her, 'Lo here,' and 'Lo there,' but the paths haven't been those of simple good works. Stacy, I think she will presently make a lovely friend for young girls when she finds her own standing-place. She doesn't want to live a useless life, but something brave and noble and sweet; and it will attract many to her side when she finds the magic key to human hearts. Shall we help her a little? I might have protested about this experiment because I couldn't do it all myself; and think how much real pleasure I should have missed."

"But going to Niagara cannot help her any."

"I think it can. Giving pleasure to you and Aunt Jane will broaden and sweeten her nature. It will open more readily to the next thing. It will be easier for her to propose some other enjoyment to a soul that may be famishing for it. And, Stacy, I think sometimes there is as fine a grace in accepting a favor as in bestowing one."

The subtle disapprobation was going out of Stacy Delamater's face.

"I think we who want to give ought to be ready to take from others. 'Charity seeketh not her own.' We can even suffer to be misunderstood until such a time as the Lord makes it plain."

"Pearl, you ought to be" — and then Stacy stopped with a hot, scarlet face, laughed with embarrassment, and added, "you are a missionary not only to the Gentiles, but us stiff-necked Jews. I must run away before you convert me, before you make me believe going to Niagara a high, heroic sacrifice on my part."

Pearl kissed her, and they both laughed as she slipped out of the doorway.

Aunt Jane had fallen asleep. Stacy sat down by the window to think it over, and to plan a future for Pearl.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRICK OF A THORN

AUNT JANE and Stacy talked the little tour over in the morning. The elder was deputed to make the proper speech of acceptance. Stacy still had a queer feeling about it. Of course it would be a delight. A secret exultation sprang up in her soul of the surprise it would be to the Wendover girls. That was rather a low source of gratification, but she could not quite crush it out.

She and Aunt Jane! That gave it an air of dignity. Only it seemed as if the real satisfaction would be talking it over afterwards. Sabrina would arrogate to herself the past experience in her languid indifference that was so trying.

"Aunt Jane is delighted," she said to Sabrina; and Aunt Jane felt it her duty to express some enthusiasm for Stacy.

Miss Eastwood brought down some fine photographs; and when everybody had "looked their fill," she gave them to Rhea, whose eyes kindled

with enthusiasm at possessing such a treasure. There was the little bustle of packing, looking over time-tables, and arranging routes.

About mid-afternoon Mr. Olmstead came out for Miss Searle. They had both been much interested in a pretty young woman whose husband had gone off to look for work a month before. She had heard from him only once. With a sick baby and a child not yet three years old, she had done whatever work was possible; but her rent was behind, and she had been warned out of her wretched tenement—and her baby was dying.

“Afterward bring her and the other child here,” said Pearl.

Olmstead lifted his brows. “Do you mean here in this Paradise?” He gave a vague smile, thinking of Hollis Winchester. “And Miss Eastwood” —

“Miss Eastwood complains because we do not go down to real depths. Our pensioners have turned out so strangely prosperous and helpful. But man doesn’t live by bread alone, though there are enough that hunger for that. ‘Every word’—did you ever think of the wide meaning? Then Miss Eastwood is going away for a week or ten days.”

“Going away?” He could hardly imagine

Chester House without her. A mysterious expression wavered over his face.

"Is she tired" —

"No," interrupted Pearl hastily. "She has been learning some of the lessons in this new 'Country,' and is going to practise them. She will find work enough presently. Every earnest seeker does."

Then they went back to the poor woman who had known and suffered so much, and who was but little past twenty. Stacy and Sabrina came downstairs. The two others were standing under the branching tree by the gate, waiting for Miss Searle.

A great light flooded Stacy's girlish mind, a great joy as well. She was glad in the farthest depth of her soul that Sabrina was going away. The remembrance of her in the hammock, and the eyes turned towards her, flashed over the girl. Yes, Sabrina was beautiful; she had all the wonderful arts of fascination at her finger-ends. And men, good men, went down to them. This pre-figured life was what would suit Pearl Disbrowe to the finest fibre of her being. Had any one a right to charm it away, to despoil the first rare sweetness? It was not even as if Sabrina would care eventually.

She was going on out to them. Stacy caught her arm.

"Don't," she said in a tone that was not much more than a penetrative whisper. "Oh, can't you see? It is the one destiny that ought to come to Pearl; and the whole world ought to stand aside and let her take it, before it is flawed and marred by any wrong thing coming between. Are you very angry with me? But you have the greater world to choose from" —

Stacy stopped, her face in a flood of scarlet, her lips quivering; and the tears of shame and affright rushed to her eyes. Her clasp on Sabrina's arm had tightened, but the other hardly noted it.

"You think" — she began, and her voice had such a strained, hollow sound that it sent a shiver through every fibre of her own being.

"If it could go on unbroken, uninterrupted! Pearl is so lovely, so good! The best there is ought to come to her. And you like her — you have been so generous. People do not always think in time — oh, are you very angry? The thing seemed to say itself."

Stacy turned to fly. She longed to go to the ends of the earth.

"Angry? No," answered Sabrina, in a soft tone. She stood uncertain.

"It was horribly rude. And when you had just been so kind, so beneficent" —

Sabrina turned her round, drew her closer, and they walked down the wide hall.

"You are right," she said. "It would be a pity to mar from any thoughtlessness. No, I am not vexed in the least. The same impression came to me almost at first. Yes, Pearl Disbrowe is worthy of the best there is in the world, of the destiny for which she seems so excellently fitted. O Stacy, don't cry! I am glad you thought so much about her. We will try to be her best friends always."

Stacy ran up-stairs, and hid her throbbing face in the pillow. What had possessed her? But she had always loved Pearl, and it was not as if Sabrina really could come to care. If she meant to be regardful of others, here, surely, was a place to begin. For Mr. Olmstead cared a great deal for Pearl. He came to her with so many things; he deferred to her judgment. And if ever any one was meant for a minister's wife from the beginning, that girl was Pearl Disbrowe! Not every minister, but Mr. Parke Olmstead.

She had never seen any one she thought good enough for Pearl until now. It was such a perfect little dream.

"I can't be very sorry that I spoke," Stacy half sobbed to herself. "I couldn't have accepted anything at her hands with this grudging thought between. And she has so much. She would not want to marry him anyhow, and it would mar all his life."

Sabrina Eastwood went through the open door, the vine-covered back porch, and into the old garden, so suggestive of the elder English poets, — the wide apple boughs glistening with fruit, the straight, prim pears, a tree of downy peaches, the old orchard fencing it in, sheltering it, and letting in the sifting sunshine. The humming-birds and the bees set the air all a-quiver; the quaint fragrance touched her, and she dropped down on a rustic seat; her soft, white hands clasped each other, and the fire opal shot out a long ray.

“Given up herself” — not “many times,” but just once. There was that other brief vision, — that strong, eager, earnest manhood crossing her path, and dropping a seed that had been struggling upward, the kind of plant that could not shoot forth in a single night. Yet it had changed many things for her; she knew that well; and it had made this a curious, unfolding existence. She had been in no haste to go down to the heart of things. She had thought little about the life, except that it lifted one up to finer heights, into the wide soul-comprehension. Hers was not the nature to hurry along, but garner delicately, bit by bit, dream by slow degrees, build with nicest care. It seemed to her that she had discerned something, a possibility that, like the opening of heaven, blinded one’s eyes at first.

She had had need latterly to study the signs and evade them. But these had come with the fitness, the sweetness of that grand harmony, touching the edge of all higher human pulses and floating off to the infinite, begun here and carried forward to the full fruition of the life. A strong sweet, upholding human love that would never let any one waver or doubt!

It could be hers! The exultation and the abnegation came so close together that the joy and the pang overlapped. To know that a word, a glance, the mere movement of a finger, might bring it to her! To stand aside and let another take it! If this other one was unworthy there might be some excuse. But it was simply self, or the giving up of self. Ah, she might have all the world to choose from, as Stacy said, but there would never be aught like this again! Out here, where it was drowned in the voices of nature, her soul made moan. She put it away with soft hands and touches of regret. Could any motive make the life yet to come as full and useful and satisfying?

She had risen, and was taking a turn in the winding paths, when Pearl came out. She stood quite still a moment, then stretched out her hands.

"I shall miss you so much, dear," Pearl said. They were not effusive women, only, as in all

finely tempered natures, a single word occasionally was a caress in itself.

"I am very glad," Sabrina said. "It gratifies one's self-esteem. If we could take you!"

Pearl smiled.

"And you will do all you can? That poor woman — and if there are others who will not distress Miss Barclay — I am afraid they are having hard times at Brentford. And this summer is yours, in which you are to do all the good work you can. I run off to pleasures."

Pearl listened to the curious accent in Sabrina's voice, that was like a new strain in a harmony that one could not instantly adjust. A tender regret, a touch of strength, an intangible suggestion that eluded one.

"Sabrina, you could not undertake a kindlier deed than this. I am so glad for Stacy, who has a girl's ardent longing for a wider outlook. The really poor are not the only ones who need a little of the good fellowship of the world. And to Aunt Jane it will be the great pleasure of her life. You imagine you are slow to think of your neighbors, but you are not. It is only because you have never been" —

"In the 'King's Country,'" interposed Sabrina, as Pearl halted a little. "Yes, I am learning to walk in new paths, and I find them

pleasant, even if I do stumble a little. And you will be busy and happy while I am gone? Pearl, Heaven ought to send you some great happiness, you give up so much of your life to others."

"I think it has." She drew Miss Eastwood's hand through her arm. "Why, you cannot realize what this summer has been to me! and its delight has all come through you. I've sometimes dreamed of such things, but I have only been able to do such a very little."

"Whatever happens, I shall make you my almoner henceforth; my adviser too. And I want you to do whatever you think best. Do you know, I shall feel quite eager to get back and peruse the fresh pages. There, that is supper; let us go in. And then I must look up my belongings."

After supper she went up to her room. There was not much to pack, since they were not going to take in gayeties. But she liked lingering there in silence. She could hear Stacy's voice downstairs, training Rhea in a pretty good-night song. She could imagine Pearl going gently from one to the other, giving of her sweet, outflowing self. Yes, the life vaguely shadowed was the true, comprehensive one for her. This special gift and power would find its special purpose, that God had indicated in so certain a manner. To trav-

erse it would be a sin. And she was truly glad that Parke Olmstead was not a poor man ; that Pearl would not need to be restricted in her good works.

Pearl went over to the station with them the next morning.

" Say good-by to Miss Searle and Mr. Olmstead for me ! " Miss Eastwood exclaimed.

" Mr. Olmstead — O Sabrina, didn't you see him last evening ? We were so engrossed with that poor Mrs. Jennings ! Why, where were you ? " and a shade of regret passed over Pearl's face.

A flush stirred Stacy's. She knew the reason. Pearl was not to blame.

" It is not as if we were going to Europe ; " and Sabrina's tone had a certain lightness. " You will hardly miss us before we shall be back again ; at least, Stacy and myself. "

A smile hovered over the beautiful face.

" No, she does not really care, " ruminated Stacy. " It would only be ' pastime ere she went to town. ' And to have Pearl's future marred for a few weeks' amusement ! Society people are always expecting homage — demanding it. But she hasn't been a bit cross with me ; " and Stacy's conscience was at rest.

As the cars steamed out, Pearl turned her horse's head toward Brentford. Sabrina caught sight of the movement, and a vague wonder en-

tered her mind as to whether Mr. Olmstead would think her abrupt or indifferent? She ought not to feel anxious about what he might think, or whether he thought of her at all. Yet the friendship had been hers in the first instance. It might be again. She did not want to shut out of her future this strong, self-reliant, clear-sighted man, whose sympathies were inspiring, whose Christianity took hold of all human lives; who could reach up to the great things with a certain faith, and to whom the weak and small appealed in the wide claim of humanity; who made the daily living so real that it must perforce bear fruit. He could take hold spiritually upon the great things of God.

Did she want something like this to lean upon, — tangible presences? Some one to make sure and beautiful paths for her feet, to lift her with an unmistakable strength, up among the high things? Was she one of those who would always need guidance? Was there no real stamina, only a languid longing?

Aunt Jane was making some comment; so Miss Eastwood glanced up and smiled. There came a quick realization that her duty for the present lay here, not in vague dreaming. She had undertaken to give these two people a pleasure; and it was as great a duty as if she were in her world of

society, where she lived up to the fine requirements of thorough breeding. For, worldly as Mrs. Vantine undoubtedly was, she never emphasized any point by rudeness or indifference. When she gave, it was of her best; when she withheld, it was done with the elegance of dignity.

Stacy did not seem disposed to talk. Miss Eastwood felt there was something to be adjusted before the real pleasure began. Stacy was always at home with Pearl. What intangible giving was it that people could accept so unquestioningly? Was it of one's self?

She turned her chair, and smiled over to Aunt Jane in a wistful sort of way, venturing upon kindly commonplaces as they went flying through fields and orchards, long meadow reaches, bits of woodland, pretty little hamlets, and large towns, pausing now and then at some station, then plunging again into the rich breath and mingled odors of undisturbed country.

There were many little things, Sabrina found. The blind needed adjusting; she discovered some bright bits in her illustrated paper. She sent for a cup of tea, and begged Stacy to have a glass of milk. The day grew warmer. When they had to stop for a connection, she proposed that Aunt Jane should take a little walk, to break up the stiffness of sitting so long.

After a while the sun began to throw slanting shadows ; the air grew cooler with fragrance from streams and sedgy places. Now the rushing of the river, here the reverberation among the rocks, and presently the wide, warm summer night, making the shadows indistinguishable, or throwing up a cluster of village lights, like sparks struck off and vanishing in a second.

Aunt Jane settled herself comfortably in her chair and nodded, and the two girls drew closer together. It seemed to Stacy a week since they left Chester House, and when they stepped out on the platform she stood quite still and helpless. Some one came in between.

"Oh, no," said a refined voice, "I don't think she is her daughter. The smaller one really looks more like her. But if either of my daughters grows up to treat me with such lovely consideration I shall call myself a happy woman. Besides her beauty, she was good to look at. She never fidgeted or fretted about the heat. She has such exquisite repose of manner that she might be a pattern for young womanhood. I was so glad when I found they were coming on to Niagara. I really wanted to see more of her" —

"Stacy," said a soft voice ; and, as the girl turned toward Sabrina and the hack, she caught sight of a fellow-passenger who had been sitting

opposite them most of the day. Yes, it was Miss Eastwood to whom the lady referred.

They were so tired that the comfort of their room was delightful. Aunt Jane was a little dazed and confused, but Miss Eastwood seemed just as much at home as at Wendover; and it was good to go to bed.

Stacy Delamater colored consciously the next morning when she saw her *vis-à-vis* of the day before at the end of the table where the waiter seated them. She felt curiously stranded. All her girlish audacity seemed to desert her, and she watched Sabrina narrowly. Yes, there was something admirable about her. She could satirize the society airs and graces when they were all on an equality at Wendover, but here she saw their manifold uses. How charmingly she put Aunt Jane forward, and made her appear as if she had been used to hotels all her life. There was a delicate sort of effacement that Stacy had never connected with Miss Eastwood. Her conscience pricked her a little as last night's comment came back to her. Yes, Sabrina's deference and consideration made something more than a plain countrywoman out of Aunt Jane. She did not seem at all apprehensive of the elder woman making blunders or betraying any unaccustomedness.

Ah, what a day it was! What days they all

were! They studied the marvel of grandeur from its many sides and under all varieties of aspects, — sunrise and sunset, calm and storm; for they had one afternoon of blinding, driving rain.

Sabrina listened with new interest to Aunt Jane's quaint, delighted comments, and her spirit of devout gratitude to the Maker of all things. She was learning how sweet a satisfaction one might gather in bestowing real pleasures upon those whose lives did not abound in such gratifications. And she had thought herself tired of almost everything!

"I feel as if I'd done more than look at the promised land; I've fairly been in it. And the Lord just put this in your heart, Sabrina. What I have to give thanks for is, that you listened and went about the Father's business, which, as I take it, is giving comfort and joy to human souls. My dear, if you and Pearl go on, you'll make the waste places blossom like the rose."

A new and strange humility filled Sabrina Eastwood's soul. Could she do something besides the mere giving of money?

"And now," she said, "we must go on to Alexandria Bay. It would be a shame to come so near and not see the famous Thousand Isles. It doesn't really take us out of our way."

"My dear, you're too generous to an old woman like me!"

What a world of beauty this was! What bits of poetry it suggested! They could have lingered forever in this scene. And then there was Lake Champlain and the Au Sable, romantic and historic ground. They sailed and drove and rambled, took railroad journeys hither and thither, coming at last down the State of Vermont to the little south-westerly corner of New Hampshire, with its farms glowing in all the plenitude of late summer.

Mrs. Ford gave the travellers a most hospitable welcome. There were suggestions of Aunt Jane about her; but, even with the interest of children who had grown up and married, her life had settled into narrower lines. There had been no wide outlooks into the greater world.

A very plain, old-time farmhouse it was, with its high-peaked roof and overhanging eaves, its low ceilings and great rooms, its small windows with greenish panes of glass, its wide chimneys, and high, narrow mantels. The kitchen floor was worn and uneven, in spite of its yearly coat of paint. Here and there a rug of braided rags; chairs with seats of stout list, the original splints having gone their way half a century before.

It was mid-afternoon when they reached this primitive haven of rest. Mrs. Ford was alone, her remaining home daughter having gone to visit a

married sister. She gave them a hearty welcome, though she could not forbear bantering her sister on "trapesing about as if she were not more than twenty."

"I've almost gone back to twenty," declared Mrs. Herrick. "I never felt so young and so resolved to make the best of what remains to life. 'To whom much is given' — you remember, Martha? I feel as if the whole storehouse of God's beautiful earth had been opened to me."

And if she felt so, how ought it to be with herself, Sabrina Eastwood asked in the thinking fashion so much her wont of late.

Stacy had planned to return to Chester House with Sabrina. But she had unconsciously learned some lessons she thought she had all by heart, from sheer necessity, long ago. Sabrina's unassuming solicitude had put even her best efforts to shame.

The two were sitting on the old porch in the soft light of the new moon. A neighbor had come in, and the elders were having an old-time chat in the sitting-room.

Stacy had said, "Must you go to-morrow?" and Sabrina had answered.

"You won't mind if I don't return to Greenfields with you — will you?" Stacy began hesitatingly.

"Why!" Sabrina exclaimed, "I thought" —

"Yes, I meant to. I was quite tired of this

place every summer. But I have changed even to myself. I can't explain, only I seem to have grown out of my careless girlhood, the complacent satisfaction with myself that I look back to with a feeling of shame. I have always thought if I wanted a lovely pattern for my life, I should take Pearl Disbrowe" —

"There could not be a purer or sweeter one," Sabrina subjoined softly, in a pause.

Stacy's hand slipped gently over Sabrina's, and in the vague light she could see the shine of the beautiful fire opal on the white finger.

"I want to say something" — her voice had a hurried, half-tremulous sound, as if she were trying to gather courage as she went along. "I have never done you full justice. I have looked at you from my own narrow point of view. I think I have been secretly envious. I didn't want to accept your lovely invitation — can you understand that? It was my own pride, because I could not give you anything back."

"O Stacy, as if" — Sabrina's tone showed the wound.

"Yes. Pearl set it before me in its true light. You see I am confessing my evil-mindedness. I want to say now that it has been one of the lessons, and one of the delights of my life, that I shall always treasure. Thanking you for it won't

express anything. And I am more than grateful for Aunt Jane's pleasure."

"It was a pleasure to me; you must believe that. And when I recall the many kindnesses in my childhood" — Sabrina's voice trembled with tender remembrance.

"I didn't half do you justice. I was afraid you might be secretly mortified because we did not come up to the modern standards of style. I meant to watch over her and check any exuberance; but you made her appear so simply at home everywhere, so at ease, so absolutely ladylike and pretty—I must tell you what two ladies said," and Stacy repeated the incident of their first day's journey.

"If you hold in such esteem your small debt to her," the girl went on, "what must mine be? In a general way I have been grateful, but these days have been like an unfolding to me. I said I could never be the careless girl again. I have gone into a new world. And though one side of me longs to be with you and Pearl, and watch you in your generous work, it would really hurt Aunt Matt to have me go, and I know it would delight Aunt Jane to think I cared enough to stay when there was another pleasure at hand. And if I mean to be brave and better from this time henceforth, here is the place to begin."

"You are heroic, Stacy. Yet Pearl will feel very much disappointed. She loves you" —

"And I am going to be worthier of her love. There was another thing" — Stacy's face was scarlet in the fragrant dusk — "I was rude to you one day. I had no right to speak of such sacred matters. And now I think there isn't any place or position that you couldn't fill with a winsome charm. I hope all that is best in life will come to you. You can do so many sweet and gracious deeds; you can make others feel that money is not the mere setting, but that it can help to enhance every other gift. To-night I am very glad that you are really rich."

"Thank you," Sabrina answered, and the pressure on the hand indicated still more than the words. "I am trying a little, too. Perhaps we are both taking the path Pearl has made more beautiful—to the 'King's Country.'"

Then they sat a long while in silence.

CHAPTER XIII

TO THE UTTERMOST FARTHING

SABRINA EASTWOOD reached the station late in the afternoon. The sun was making long shadows, and already a dewy-like fragrance pervaded the air. Pearl was awaiting her with a face of welcome, and caught the outstretched hand.

"But Stacy?" she asked.

"Stacy decided to remain. She is well and happy. We had a lovely time, and have settled to a real friendship. And how has it fared with you all?"

"Here is the phaeton ; jump in. I am very glad to get you back," and Pearl's smile touched Sabrina. "We have all been as well as usual, and have increased our boarders. Brentford has been unfortunate. Some of the mills have stopped for repairs. And did you see the accident noticed in any papers?"

"An accident?" Miss Eastwood started and turned pale.

"At the Winchester Works. For two days

they thought Mr. Winchester fatally injured. No one is clear whether the explosion occurred first, or part of the building fell, but one end is in ruins. There were only a few men at work. There had been a strike, and he was intending to shut down as soon as the last order was finished. The few hands at work went in at some back entrance, it seemed, so as not to be waylaid by the strikers. Mr. Winchester had just gone up and urged them to hurry out of the building, but they didn't understand; and in trying to save them, as he was the last, he was caught in the ruins. Two men were injured; the others managed to escape with slight mishaps."

Miss Eastwood drew a long breath. Why was it that her heart should throb with gratitude that no evil had befallen Parke Olmstead? And now she suddenly took herself to task. Surely she did not wish Hollis Winchester any harm!

"We brought over a poor woman and two children, whose husband was the most seriously hurt. He had to be taken to a hospital. They were very poor Germans, though the woman is partly French, with two pretty little children. So you may imagine Mr. Olmstead has had his hands full. He was with Mr. Winchester night and day at first, and even now they hardly know

how to pacify the sick man when Mr. Olmstead is away."

"Is he — Mr. Winchester, in any danger now?"

"There was some injury to his head that the doctors considered extremely critical at first. He has barely passed the danger point, and still has spells of wandering. He has a broken leg and a broken arm."

"Poor fellow! One can hardly imagine such a vigorous physique helpless. What a misfortune! And now about Miss Barclay?"

"She is a little weaker, but very happy. And Rhea is a comfort to them both. Miss Searle has been such a help. Miss Golding came up one day. She has some friends interested in the new town. They are to build one of the factories, and are planning rows of dwelling-houses. I liked her. She was sorry not to see you. She fell in love with the old house, and thinks it ought never to be disturbed."

"I have resolved that it never shall be," said Sabrina Eastwood.

A wavering color swept over Pearl Disbrowe's face.

"Do you know, did you know, that Mr. Winchester cared a great deal about the place? And in his delirium he wanted continually to come. They were afraid he would attempt it, and never

left him a moment. Then he fancied he was walking in the old garden with his mother. It was very pathetic."

"They held it wrongfully," Sabrina rejoined with a flash of spirit.

Pearl glanced at the cold lines that were like a little frost over the face. The story of Winchester's passionate regard had stirred her to the uttermost. She had almost felt that she could plead his cause. But this was no time, her fine understanding of Sabrina told her. So she turned to other topics.

Olmstead was waiting on the porch. He came and took the reins, helped out Pearl, and looked straight into Sabrina's face as he took her hand. The scarlet flashed up vividly. She had seen that look before. It was as if she trod on air. Neither of them spoke; but he still held her hand as they reached the porch, and met the other welcomes. She smiled in curious confusion, and then crossed the hall with Pearl and went up-stairs.

"I've come in and taken possession, we were so full," said Pearl; "but I kept it looking like you. And here are your letters. I was going to send this yesterday, but I was afraid it would miss you, and another to-day. I'm sure Mrs. Vantine is planning to spirit you away."

Sabrina half smiled. "Did you miss me? Would you care very much?"

"Yes, I should care. We all missed you. I began to realize how much I had made a confessional of this room, asked advice and come to you with perplexities. You undervalue yourself, I think," and Pearl's face flushed. Ah, if she could make her understand all she was capable of doing! Sabrina turned toward the window; the praise touched her more than she cared to show.

"There, I will run away and let you get freshened up a bit," Pearl continued. "I'll keep Mr. Olmstead to tea. He has scarcely had a chance to come here. You can't think what a curious friendship has grown up between him and Mr. Winchester."

Pearl ran lightly down the stairs. Sabrina laid aside her hat and wrap, searched the wardrobe for a thin summer gown, and loitered over her toilet, glancing impatiently at the letters. She had few correspondents. Mrs. Vantine's letters were distinguished by her small crest. She almost knew their contents. How pretty the old garden looked, and the line of tall trees beyond! What a lovely evening sky! She had been away only two days over a fortnight, yet everything seemed to look at her with welcoming eyes. During that time Mr. Olmstead had hardly been here! True, there was

Hollis Winchester's accident ; but he had come to-night. She flushed, and turned her eyes away from the eyes in the glass that held such a strange delight, as she recalled the meeting of a few moments ago. Did he understand the kind of joy that had illumined every feature? Her own pulses were all of a quiver ; the roseate hue crept up to the very edges of her soft hair. He could love her, and she?—she had honestly tried to cultivate just this pleasure in the coming of some other person, and remained friendly, indifferent. Had she cared for him in the old time? Was there such a thing as sudden knowledge and sudden preference? Something in the strong, honest manhood had touched her, even then, an influence she had not been able to understand.

Somewhere she remembered reading that it was given once to every human soul to step into a satisfying and inspiriting life ; to do its best work, to reap its richest reward. What if this was her auspicious moment? She could step gladly out of a purposeless life, but was she fitted to take up this high work? If she did it for love's sake alone, would that be the purest, highest motive? Would it not be the spirit of self-pleasing, rather than self-sacrifice? Was there not a more exalted motive, that Pearl had set to be a light upon her path? Ah, should not the reward go to Pearl?

There were women who, having seen one perfect vision not meant for them, had bravely left it to its rightful possessor, and carried about with them that serene grace of self-abnegation, who followed steadfastly the great aim that "He who pleased not Himself" set before His followers. She had come into these other lives; had she any right to mar them when she already had so much? If she had not seen! If another had not seen!

The summons to supper roused her, and she finished her toilet. Her gown was very simple; but Parke Olmstead, glancing up, discerned a new beauty in her face. Rhea Vasilis had just come in from her walk with a handful of wild-flowers, and she laid them by Miss Eastwood's plate. Had love and appreciation worked the miracle she read in the girl's face?

Sabrina was in some sense a guest of honor. The simple homage touched her. It was just the olden household together. Desire White had insisted that the others would feel more at home in her cheerful kitchen. Already temporary homes had been found among the farmers for some destitute ones they had taken in. Their readiness had moved others to sympathy.

There was much to hear and to tell. Parke Olmstead watched the fair girl and listened to

her voice. They all seemed giving an account of their stewardship, and if hers had the glow of pleasure it was none the less delightful.

"I'm so sorry Stacy isn't coming back," said Rhea. "I have been studying her exercises, and doing little things for her, and I know she would be glad to hear"—the girl stopped suddenly, flushing.

"Miss Disbrowe will take care that she hears," said Olmstead. "Let us tell Miss Eastwood that we not only had a favorable but a most encouraging verdict on your voice, from a professor who took the trouble to come up from the city, a friend of mine on whom we can depend."

Miss Eastwood glanced over to her with a smile. Here was something that she could help along.

Afterward they sauntered out on the porch. She went over to Miss Barclay's side, while Pearl and Mr. Olmstead seated themselves on the step. There was a delightful friendliness in their talk, in that aspect of comradeship in work, in belief, in sympathy. Had she mistranslated that brief moment? Was it an alien glance, a something he hardly knew himself? She had only to efface herself for a season; let her do it while the purpose was strong within her.

"I must go." Parke Olmstead had said this before, but now he rose with a regretful air,

and, coming over, pressed Miss Barclay's hand. Sabrina did not move, only smiled with a vague gentleness that might betoken indifference.

It puzzled Olmstead as he went down the path, saying some last words to Pearl. He admitted to himself that Sabrina's return had shed a radiance over the whole house. And the glance given and returned—had it meant anything? What did he wish it to mean?

Desire brought lamps and set them on the hall table. Miss Barclay began to feel the night air.

"I must go and read my letters," Sabrina said, with a good-night to the elder woman, and a smile for Rhea.

She sat a while by the open window in a curious tumult. "She had made her decision," she said to herself, yet a glowing vision of the future would leap up now and then and transfigure her whole life. He could guide and shape it. She would feel so at rest, so content. Was it necessary to give up so much, the very heart out of one's life? But if Pearl cared too—

Mrs. Vantine's first letter was full of complaints, that did not rise to absolute dissatisfaction, since the journey had proved a success for Mr. Vantine and Sabrina, and she evinced resignation for their sakes. "Sabrina, you must be bored to death. There is time for a week or two some-

where before the Tuxedo engagement. What time will you come in town? Telegraph at once."

As no message had arrived, the second letter was more urgent. "Your uncle must see you on an important matter of business. If we do not hear, he will be up Thursday evening. I have had grave doubts all the while concerning the propriety of your going off in that mysterious manner with people I had never met. Surely you cannot have fallen into any unfortunate entanglement!"

There were several unimportant notes. Sabrina went down presently, and found Pearl in Miss Barclay's arm-chair on the porch. Rhea was improvising on the piano.

"How beautiful!" she said. "Pearl, you have really found a genius. What about her voice? You know I shall be only too glad to help."

"Her voice seems one of great promise. And it is doubtful whether her eyes would admit of the continued strain of designing, though she has such beautiful ideas. Mr. Olmstead has taken a great interest in her. Of course Mrs. Duane will go wherever it is best, and do what is best. What a strange providence there has been in all this!"

"Does he, Mr. Olmstead—I mean, are you all likely to spend the winter in the city?" she

asked in a little confusion. "Will you remain here until cold weather? Tell me what you would like; for I must join Mrs. Vantine to-morrow, or she will descend upon us and be horrified."

"To-morrow! O Sabrina, do not go."

"I had better," she answered. "I have had a lovely summer, Pearl, and I have been learning a little about the great work there is to do in the world. I am glad of this glimpse into your country. In the future," she hesitated a little, "I may come to you and share a wider work. But just now, are you content to stay here and let me go for a little? I have not freed myself from worldly shackles."

There was a touch of conventional gayety in the voice. Not even Pearl's fine intuitions could divine the struggle going on in her mind.

"I have had so little of you lately," began Pearl regretfully. "And we all hoped—we wanted you to help plan."

No, she could not trust herself to stay and plan, to see Mr. Olmstead daily, until she had more strength of purpose or will. It was harder giving up herself than she had first thought. And what if she made a plunge back into the vortex of society, met other men, accepted the intangible homage paid to beauty and wealth? Was she quite sure Mr. Olmstead's fancy had

any deeper foundation? Perhaps she had used little arts,—the slow droop or raising of the eyes, an inflection of the voice, a pose of grace. That had been part of her training. To be attractive was an aim. But if, instead, one made truth, kindness, unselfishness attractive!

Oh, she must not dream! She roused herself suddenly, and clasped Pearl's arm with a touch of apprehension.

"But Miss Barclay! O Pearl—are you not afraid of what may come to pass?"

"Of the—shall we say transition? When one looks at it as she does, and says with the Psalmist, 'My cup runneth over,' and in his love, 'I can fear no evil,' it is only going forward gently to meet the end. She would like to remain here, for the end cannot be far off. And she would like to sleep in the old churchyard at Greenfields. Mrs. Duane is resigned. There will be Rhea. The girl loves them both with all the fervor of her awakened nature. Then I suppose Chester House will be shut up again. Yet it seems as if some one ought to live here right along. I wish you really cared for it. Or, if there were some one who did!"

She could think of some one in whose story she was deeply interested. How could she, in turn, interest Sabrina?

It came into Miss Eastwood's mind that here might be the beginning of a charity, with Pearl at its head.

"We can talk it over when I come back;" she could not in a moment formulate a plan. "Stay as long as you can; shelter whoever you will. I couldn't do anything half so worthy with it. I feel poor in the ways of comfort that you give with exquisite sympathy. I must study to gain the ability to plan for the benefit of others. I want you to have the power to carry out your aims and plans."

She bent and kissed her with tenderness. Was her dream taking definite shape? Pearl and another in this old place, making a blessed centre for the new town; for poor souls brought from the over-crowded marts, and trained in wholesome, thrifty ways; little children coming to know what green fields and flowers and the singing of birds really meant. She had listened with deep interest to Olmstead's plans of social regeneration. He and Pearl would be a moving power in the world. She must not look at these lives with any secret envy.

"I am tired," Sabrina said presently. "You will not mind if I say good-night."

Pearl Disbrowe half listened to the music, half followed her own thoughts. There had been

something to say, and she had not said it. She had become interested in Hollis Winchester's misfortunes and his love for the old place. Olmstead had told her most of the story, leaving out the protest made about the summer's experiment; how he had pleaded in his delirium to be taken back to the home of his childhood; how he remembered every nook, the old flower garden, the fields and groves, and his mother's love!"

If these two people could be brought together, and the bitterness between them be softened and disappear! If Sabrina only knew the truth! Pearl could not think of her as implacable, nor having a regard for her mother's wishes that would savor of vindictiveness. Neither could she realize all the long years of waiting that had made Mrs. Eastwood so bitter, and the late justice that had hardened her soul instead of softening it.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TARES AND THE WHEAT

MRS. VANTINE inspected her charge critically. She considered herself responsible for Sabrina Eastwood's physical well-being and her good looks until they should be safely delivered to the care of a husband. She felt a little indignant that her missives should not have been answered at once; and she had settled to the fact that Sabrina had ruined her complexion, or "gone off" in some dreadful manner. She held her at arm's length after the greeting. Sabrina's figure still showed its subtle, sinuous lines; her face had lost none of its high-bred calm, and her complexion was faultless. There was an indescribable charm for which Mrs. Vantine could find no adjective.

"I've hardly had a comfortable moment about you the last week," she began. "I had a misgiving that something dreadful had happened to you. But you are radiant! You don't look a day over nineteen. I am not sure but you ought to have a coming-out tea. Well, it is a very great relief."

Mrs. Vantine pulled out her frills and gave her head a toss of complacency. "But what have you been doing?" she added.

"I took a little journey with Mrs. Herrick and her niece, and only returned last evening. For the rest — I have been simply idling."

"Well, you were wise. The journey was fearful. And now you are fresh as a rose. There's an invitation to the Craythorpes' for a week, to meet some English people who once saw us — I have forgotten where — and to Newport. But you haven't a decent thing to wear, I dare say."

Sabrina laughed carelessly.

"Well, we must see about something at once. I am expecting a woman from Madame Nadine's every moment, and you can consult her. Your uncle made an excellent bargain with those railway shares; he wants to see you about Greenfields. He had a mind to start this morning, but I said, 'Wait, and I will go with you this afternoon.' The old place has had a great shaking up. Of course you know about it?"

"Oh, yes," Sabrina answered.

"They came in to see your uncle. A syndicate — everything is a syndicate now, if it only wants to buy a city lot."

"Some parties came to see me."

Mrs. Vantine raised her brows. It was an ar-

ticle of her creed that a young woman could know nothing of business.

"Of course you referred them to Mr. Vantine?"

"I had not decided about giving up the place," Sabrina answered slowly.

"You didn't hold out any hopes, or allow yourself to be drawn into any promises? These people are not the ones who have set about building up the town. They are outside parties, dealing in futures, who mean to bring the property into the market after the town is really built. Your uncle is shrewd enough to play one off against the other. If they miss it, why it's their lookout; and if they have to hold the property twelve or fifteen years, that is their business also, with taxes and interest eating it up."

Mrs. Vantine nodded with confident sagacity. Miss Eastwood kept silent.

"So it is lucky you didn't take that Winchester offer. This is double. Have you seen anything of the man? Wasn't there some sort of accident? I am sure your uncle was reading it."

"There was—at the mill. I was away. I only heard of it last evening. He is very ill."

Mrs. Vantine studied her carefully. "Did he come over to Chester House?"

"Oh, no," answered Sabrina.

"What did you all do? Was there much com-

pany? Your friend must have been very entertaining. What was her husband like?"

"There was no husband." Sabrina smiled now. "An elderly widow, and an invalid sister; an adopted daughter; Miss Disbrowe; and Mrs. Herrick and her niece came."

"All women! Is there any society?"

"Not what we would call society, or I might not have fared so well."

The woman from the modiste's was announced. She had samples, patterns, and styles. Sabrina listened in dismay. Had she ever considered wherewithal she should be clothed of such paramount importance? It was irksome, irritating. How had she ever endured it? How could she endure it now?

Then came luncheon, shopping, a continuous sort of worrying, a ceaseless purring of regret that the summer had been wasted. Everything that did not tend directly to the admiration of society was a waste in Mrs. Vantine's estimation. She was never cross nor sharp, seldom ironical; but she felt now that there were so many weeks, so many lost opportunities to deplore. Sabrina wondered whether this was all the aim in life that inspired Mrs. Vantine. She had been wearied with it before, but now her whole being made a protest.

The current was changed by the entrance of Mr. Vantine. He was a rather stout, middle-aged man, fine looking still. Whatever he touched came to the fore sooner or later. He slipped out of doubtful things long enough beforehand to clear himself of any suspicious connection. He was not regularly in business, he merely dabbled ; but larger operators consulted him. He was on boards of directors ; he was trustee of several large estates, and his business honesty was unquestioned.

"My dear Sabrina," he said, taking both hands, "it is a great pleasure to see you again. You can't imagine how we have missed you. Well, have you fallen so in love with Chester House that you could hardly resolve to leave it? We were on the point of surprising you. The fever of improvement has broken out, I hear. Towns are not so often built up in a night as at the West, but we steady-going Easterners have a little push left. And it is amusing how we do push each other when we get started. Are the factories in operation?"

Sabrina smiled. "Hardly, though the change seems magical. I am not sure that I approve unqualifiedly."

Mr. Vantine rubbed his hands softly together. They were white and well shaped, with rather long fingers.

"No; women seldom are ranged on the hubbub side of improvement. They have a certain vein of romance about old places and old furniture. Mrs. Vantine has brought home no end of boxes of ugly curiosities, to rouse the envy of her friends. How far are you from this embryo city?"

"Two miles or so from the point of the new railroad station; the factories are to be built in that vicinity. The streets are laid out in our direction. There is a gentle ascent until Chester Farm is reached, then the ground declines again."

Mr. Vantine raised his brows and compressed his lips. "So far as that?" he inquired. "Then, Sabrina, let me tell you, you have received a first-class offer for the old place, and I should close with it! They may go a little higher if I can work up the other side; but it is too good to let slip. They are crazy to put that much money where they are not certain of turning it over for years. Two miles is a long distance to build up. I am surprised. Level-headed fellows, too, with lots of money."

He looked at her with a kind of amazement, as if she were in league with them.

"There need be no hurry," she returned quietly.

"I don't know as to that. My motto has al-

ways been to strike while the iron's hot. In three months they may reconsider. It is a tremendous price! I thought you were a little wrong-headed not to close it out to Winchester. What is he saying about all this?"

"He has said nothing that I have heard."

"Well, you were on the lucky side that time! And you are in luck now. Zounds! how plucky your mother was! Not the sort of woman you'd look to for nerve, either. I suppose there is no real objection on your part? When I have squeezed these people sufficiently" —

Sabrina made a slight gesture of dissent with her hand, that arrested his voluble speech. He looked questioningly at her.

"I am in no hurry to part with Chester House," she began slowly. "I cannot make up my mind at once" —

"Really, are you going to be sentimental about the old place?" He gave a mellow, pleasant laugh, as if it amused him. "But if you liked you might keep the house and — say ten acres or so. I really must go up and take a look. Here is a rough diagram," and he took a paper out of his memorandum. "You see — yes, the house is way over here. They want the property joining on the new town, — seventy odd acres in all. Well, you might dispose of fifty. Looking at it in the

most advantageous light, the town can't stretch out to that point under ten years. Meanwhile, there are taxes, interests, and improvements. Why, it will eat up all the profits! You see *you* have the interest of the money, and that may be turned over half a dozen times. When they come to study it out they may withdraw. You had better consent to my taking the best offer I can get. You know I shall not accept a poor one."

"I wish — I would like to wait a while — I want to think," she began confusedly.

"Well, a fortnight?"

"Sabrina, we will go to Newport next week." Mrs. Vantine had been looking over some letters. The Poynters are to make their farewell visit at the Barclays', and they would be delighted to meet us again. They are to sail about the middle of September. Yes, let your uncle manage matters as he thinks best. I must send a note to Madame Nadine to-night. The packing-case can follow us. Let me see, we will start on Monday, and I will send a letter of acceptance at once. Sir Archibald has been over to the Pacific coast, and is wildly enthusiastic."

Mrs. Vantine went over to her desk.

"I will think about the offer," Sabrina said to her guardian. Then she rose and went to her own room. The bric-a-brac had been packed

away. The chairs were swathed in protecting covers. The profusion of flowers that was wont to greet her was absent, and it gave her a chilled, unhomelike feeling. The simplicity of Greenfields, the earnestness of the life there, touched her with longing. Yes, she had been in another country, where the atmosphere was fragrant with the higher purposes of the soul. Now she was to take heed again how she was clothed, how she dispensed her smiles. The needy or the suffering were not to be considered. There was a charmed circle that demanded, not the best one had to give, but certain gifts and graces. She was going back into it. For some time to come she must stand a little apart from the ideal that so stirred her. Fate took the high and inspiring possibility out of her hands. For a moment she protested ; for many moments she almost let herself be swept into the current that yawned before her.

Was this weakness the sense of disappointment because another had won the blessing that could have crowned her life? Sabrina straightened herself and glanced in the tall mirror. She thought of the creed of honor and high-mindedness that she had set for herself long before this. Now, when she had reached a larger awakening, should she let a jealous regard rob her of the grace she

had been striving to win? Had she not longed to give of her very best? Was not that herself? Should she keep back part of the price? The love that "seeketh not her own." Ah! that was it. With that high endeavor went all the rest.

That evening she listened with a tender graciousness to Mrs. Vantine's plans and her regrets for the wasted summer, the vague gossip, the anxiety that dressmakers were, the plans for a winter campaign, — subjects she should hear discussed daily, no doubt. She could be thankful she had had such a long respite from them. In many ways she could order her life anew, but it would not be wise to make any violent break. Mr. Vantine had enjoyed his dinner and his cigars, and now he half dozed, wondering how it was that women could fill up their minds with such trifles!

Miss Eastwood, with her cool freshness, was quite an acquisition. There was Sir Archibald Poynter, who had been deeply fascinated with the fair American in the early years of his widowhood, and who had supposed her eager for a title; his daughter, a nervous invalid; his niece, the traditionally robust English girl. Marianne Poynter had grown really fond of Miss Eastwood when she found she had no designs on her father, and now she welcomed her with unmistakable delight.

Marianne had her poor and her schools at home, and her plans for the advancement of the world in general. Sabrina listened to them with a graceful attention that delighted the elder woman. But how different from Pearl Disbrowe, with her active, ardent love for humanity!

She watched her host and hostess with a new interest, thinking of the pathetic story she had left behind in Greenfields. No doubt the two much-buffeted pilgrims could claim kinship. How cruel that they had been compelled to drop out of their own gentle circle! A little of the luxury here would have been so much to them, saved so many pangs in their lives. Was not Pearl Disbrowe's kindly work greater than the ostentatious charities so often discussed?

All this time she kept revolving her project in her mind. Pearl should have Chester House now, in the beginning of her life. If she, Sabrina, had gone on accumulating all these years, without any real income from that property, then surely she did not need it. Why should she seek to add to her already sufficient fortune? She wondered a little how she could best accomplish her purpose. There was no one to consult. The Vantines would consider her foolish above all women. Yet here was Marianne Poynter with a little orphanage of her own, established in a house

bequeathed by an aunt, interested in the welfare of half a dozen little girls, and using her utmost endeavor to place it on a sure and permanent foundation, — girls who were to be trained to household service, no matter what their desires or their capacities might be. And there was Rhea Vasilis, rescued from her hard, poverty-pinched life, and set in a high place, surrounded by love, some day, perhaps, to gladden the hearts of many.

There were drives and dinners, receptions and dances, plans for winter, invitations given and accepted. Between this and the Tuxedo engagement there intervened a week. Sabrina announced her intention of spending a few days at Chester House. Mr. Vantine had found his customers loath to increase their first offer, and he was holding off warily. Sabrina insisted that he should make no bargain until her return.

"I think you ought to go at once to the city, and see about your fall wardrobe. It seems to me, Sabrina, that you really do not care how you look," declared Mrs. Vantine. "You might as well turn Quaker at once."

Sabrina smiled. "They are spared a good deal of worry and anxiety. No wonder they keep looking young and pretty."

"Well, but they are really going out of fashion, you see," returned Mrs. Vantine. "I have read

in some of the statistics that they decrease in numbers every year. And there's the sisterhood idea that young unmarried women affect. It may be well enough when one feels that one's chances for marriage have passed; but I do hope, Sabrina, you won't take up any of these fads."

Sabrina smiled again. Did everything revolve about marriage? She was beginning to look at life with different eyes,—earnest eyes that, touched with the sacred fire of truth, could see how much nobler daily living might be made, without conventual seclusion. She wanted to be in the world, to take part in its advancement. She had the means; she had, too, certain gifts, not those she desired most, perhaps, but at least one talent which she must use. She could endeavor to make some virtues attractive to those with whom her daily life was cast. If she did not quite know the language of the byways, she could see that in the highways were standing many honest, fervent souls, whom "no man had hired," who were waiting for some one to show them the way, to point out the path that led to the "King's Country." She meant to so beautify some of these truths that others seeing would say, "We will go with thee." She had given up herself, and cast out the sweet hope of reward.

The September afternoon had a slight autumnal

chill in it as she was driven over the familiar way. There had been quite a frost during the night, and at noon the uncertain sky had turned off lowering, indicating a coming storm. Little of the foliage had changed. Here and there a branch of scarlet maple was outlined against the gray sky, and bunches of flame-red sumach intensified the fading green by the wayside. But the wide porch was deserted. The lonely air sent a strange thrill through Sabrina. Pearl had caught sight of her, and sprang to the door.

"I am so glad," she cried. "I wrote yesterday. Come in by the fire. You must be chilled with your drive. It has turned off quite cold."

There was a fire on the wide, old-fashioned hearth, and a pleasant fragrance of pine and hemlock diffused through the room. The spacious sofa had been drawn out from the corner, and Miss Barclay reclined there. Her eyes had a soft, mysterious brightness that transfigured her face, less thin, Sabrina thought, but with a curious transparent pallor. Mrs. Duane and Rhea were the only other inmates. The girl sat by the window doing some pencil work. Pearl had been reading. What a pretty, homelike scene it was! And in the corner stood a great jar of oak, maple, and hemlock branches, with sprays of flowers interspersed. It was almost as if one had brought in a bit of the woods.

There was a good deal to tell. Mrs. Herrick and Stacy had given them a day and a night on their homeward way, and Stacy had been charming. Matters were improving a little at Brentford. Some of the shops were running again, though not on full time. But there was less absolute suffering. Mr. Olmstead's friend had returned and relieved him from duty, though he was still staying with Mr. Winchester, who was not improving as rapidly as they had all hoped. Their household had narrowed. Miss Searle had found her opportunity as a companion and sort of secretary to an elderly invalid, whose means and kindly heart admitted of many good works. They had one poor woman still unprovided for, but Mrs. Herrick had a place opening for her.

From time to time Miss Eastwood glanced over to Miss Barclay. She remarked that Mrs. Duane brought in her supper; that Desire White came and carried her to her room in her strong arms. Presently the two girls were left alone.

"I wonder if you would care to come here another summer, Pearl, and go on with your experiment?" Sabrina asked after a long silence. "You know I had an offer for the place. Now there is another, by different parties, that has quite captured my guardian, and he proposed that if I cared for the house I should reserve that and a

few acres, and dispose of the rest. I suppose I ought to have some romantic attachment to Chester House. If mamma had ever lived here — if I had any tender associations with it, except one” —

“And that?” asked Pearl, stretching out her hand over Miss Eastwood’s.

“It is you, Pearl. Do you know you ought to be mistress of a quaint, pretty home. You seem to be a part of just such an old house as this. Whether as a wife and mother, — that would give me the most delight, — or as one dispensing kindly comforts to needy souls and bodies. But you want a standing place, a centre. Pearl, I have been thinking, planning, learning about the sacredness of the life in which ‘no man liveth unto himself.’ I have been roused from my purposeless existence. I begin to see the great work there is to be done. I haven’t the courage as yet to go out of my own sphere, but in it I can find some earnest souls that will suffice me until I reach a higher round. And I want you to go on unhampered, to feel free to try some of the experiments in which you delight. Will you take Chester House and do with it what seems best — redeem it from the disagreeable impression it has had for me? I used to think I never wanted to enter its doors. And you have made it a House Beautiful. Let me come now and then” —

Pearl drew a long breath. "You do not mean" — she said hesitatingly.

"I mean it as a gift. It has never been considered of much value until now. I have plenty without it. There have been some quarrels and unpleasant circumstances connected with it. There was no question but mamma had a right to fight for her own. Still, I sometimes wish — I do not want to sell it for so much money to strangers. I cannot make you understand" —

A soft flush stole over the fair face, and the fine brows knitted in perplexity.

"I think I do understand a little. Hollis Winchester wants it. And you are not willing he shall have it. Yet it is dearer to him than to any human being. Was the quarrel too bitter to bridge over? Can neither take a step towards it?" The voice was soft and persuasive.

Sabrina glanced steadily into the dying fire. Yes, she had been very angry at the imperious, dominant, selfish man, and rejected his proposal with scorn, as it deserved. And her mother had desired that the Winchesters should be barred out forever. Yet they also had been fighting for what they supposed their rights.

"Don't trust me with it, Sabrina," said Pearl in a pleading tone; "for I should always feel like turning it over to Mr. Winchester. I have be-

come curiously interested in him through Mr. Olmstead. He is a sort of wrong-headed, obstinate hero, who has been making a god of self and money, and who has suddenly come to see that they are not the best nor the only things in life. He and Mr. Olmstead will always be fast friends now. And he — Mr. Olmstead, wondered ” —

Sabrina flushed with sudden passion. Had they talked her over? What if Hollis Winchester — but he must know he had never really loved her. Olmstead and Winchester always friends! Winchester a chosen guest at Pearl's fireside!

“Wondered why I did not marry him, no doubt!” Sabrina's tone was bitter and sarcastic in the extreme. “Romances always make such quarrels end in that fashion.”

“No, he never thought of that.” Pearl looked up with clear, unhesitating eyes. Then she colored curiously.

“I want you to have it, Pearl; it is hardly more out of my abundance than taking Stacy and Aunt Jane to Niagara.”

The two girls looked steadily at each other.

“If you want me to have it, then offer it first to Hollis Winchester. He has met with some losses, but he is not a poor man. If he declines, then I will take it gladly.”

“He will not decline.” Her beautiful lip curled with scorn.

Pearl took the slim hands in hers, and drew Sabrina nearer. "O my dear," she cried, "why seek to perpetuate heart-burnings, enmities, and uncharity? Will they not prove a bar in the way to better things? They are aliens in the King's Country. It would take away the dearest charm for me. I should always think of the pilgrim outside the gate who could never enter in. I suppose you think me foolish to plead for a stranger."

Her voice broke. A soft flush suffused her face, but her eyes still entreated.

Was this Parke Olmstead's plan as well?

"Let me think." There was a pathetic cadence in the tone. Then she turned and went softly away.

CHAPTER XV

"I HAVE LEARNED I SHALL SAY SO MUCH
SINCE THEN"

HOLLIS WINCHESTER lay on a cot in his cosey sitting-room, where a little fire burned in the grate, and watched the flame shoot up as the coal fell apart. Calista Spence had brought up his supper, and lingered a while, talking in her shrewd, homely fashion. He had never thought to find so much sterling good sense under the commonplace exterior. Perhaps Olmstead had opened the way for her, opened many ways that Winchester had strode over unknowingly.

He would not have a lamp. He was growing a little irritable, for Olmstead had been away so long, since early in the afternoon, over to Chester House. It was curious that he had come to care for him, to depend upon him so much. And he was always wanting to hear what was going on at Chester House. Miss Disbrowe was so different from anything he had imagined one of your religious women to be. For that matter, so was Olmstead. Perhaps he, Winchester, had never been

very clear as to what really constituted religion, esteeming it as something to be sneered at as occasion offered.

For six weeks he had lain here most of the time, one week on the farthest verge of human life. He had come back weak and confused because of a dislocated shoulder, a broken leg, sundry wounds and bruises, besides a concussion of the brain, the most serious thing at first.

Wild stories had been afloat. All that was known of a certainty was Winchester's sudden rush to the drying-room up-stairs, and his command to the half-dozen men employed to fly for their lives. Then he had gone to alarm two others in a sort of wing, and here the crash had caught them. The men were but little injured, a fall having saved them, but Winchester had been buried in the ruins.

At first, foul play was suspected on the part of the disaffected workmen, two of whom had uttered threats. The explosion was a mystery. The investigation proved the machinery trustworthy; but the ruin and the fire afterward kept the secret from prying eyes. There seemed sufficient proof to commit the two ringleaders, who had made themselves notorious in other ways.

This was what Winchester heard on his recovery from delirium and unconsciousness. And though

he would have enjoyed the men's meeting their deserts on general terms, his honesty forbade their suffering wrongfully. He begged Olmstead to look after the injured men, who were recent comers in the town, non-union workers, and who had thus attracted the enmity of the old workmen. He had counted too long on the security of the building; but his first thankfulness was that there were so few lives risked, and that he was the chief sufferer.

His deposition had been sufficient to secure the discharge of the two men at a later hearing. Day after day throngs of stragglers wandered about the ruins, speculating upon its future and discussing its owner. He had never made any bid for admiration or posed on the philanthropical side of labor. A hard master, but a man of his word. Even the heroism of the rescue was rather dimmed by the damaging fact that the building was unsafe, and he had known or suspected it. What the outside world said mattered little to him. But down at the bottom of the man's soul there was a faint stirring of conscience, an irritating misgiving that there was some nobler thing to life than mere money-getting. Suppose he had gone out of the world? Would any one have cared, or felt regret or pleasant remembrance? Was that the limit of a human being's capacities?

The thought humiliated him. Was life blind and purposeless, and the end of it nullity? Was not this his belief? The thought seized him and would not let him go. If there was anything better, any certainty —

As he lay there day after day, unable to evade a certain responsibility, unwilling to take it up manfully, his power of recuperation suffered in the struggle. He grew ashamed of his own weak, irritable nerves, his temper and unreason. Calista Spence shone as nurse. She looked upon him as a fractious child, who did not at all understand what was best for him, and with whom it would be foolish to take umbrage.

In the long, tiresome nights when he could not drive away his tormenting thoughts, Parke Olmstead became not only a friend, but a comforter. The "preaching" that Winchester secretly protested against, and for which he armed himself, never came. Once when they were discussing the accident he said rather ironically, "Olmstead, how can you let such an opportunity pass? I've told you the truth. The matter might have been averted. I could even have saved myself this suffering. Was I allowed to go on to reap the reward of selfishness, to bring about a certain punishment, that it might convince me of wrong-doing, and convert me from the error of my ways?"

"You took a certain risk, as we do in many things. It seems to me it would have been wiser to have made no issue with your men until your orders were finished. Then you would have been free to make whatever repairs you deemed proper. You knew the building was not safe. You were not trusting to any unseen power, but going against your own better judgment. If you put your hand into the fire it burns ; you do not expect God to suspend natural causes, or protect against the working of natural laws. God has not promised this to any one. The providential part to me is that so few innocent persons were compelled to suffer. What if you had some man's death on your conscience, instead of your own suffering? And why should I preach to you when your own conscience does it even more powerfully?"

That was true enough. Call it what he might, the inward monitor would make itself felt. There was no need of sermons. What had been the real gain of his thirty odd years? The great aim of his life had been frustrated. A fair, slim girl, with no apparent strength of character, had stood in his way, had rendered his efforts nugatory, and his own obstinacy had brought about a cataclysm. He had his lifework to begin over again. True, he would not be altogether impoverished. But the prospect looked dreary. For

the first time he asked what he had really done for himself. For others he had done nothing.

So he fell to studying Olmstead more closely. A man working cheerfully and with simple directness in the larger channels of true living, aiming to benefit his fellow-creatures, not from the sense of duty, not measuring out justice with an exact balance, but remembering mercy.

Olmstead read or talked as the other's mood might be,—bright, breezy bits of out-door delight that were inspiring to one condemned to helplessness for the first time in an active life. And just at evening, when nerves and body began to feel the strain and weariness of the day, Olmstead had expedients to tide over the time.

After Winchester had fretted away the twilight and refused the lamp for the second time, scolded Calista for mending the fire and answered impatiently when she made some comment on Olmstead's unusual stay, he lay there in the soft darkness with his own thoughts for company. Eight o'clock, nine—yes, that was the firm but elastic step on the board walk! There seemed something of importance to say. He could hear Mrs. Kent's voice with a certain impressiveness in it, accented with surprise and sympathy. Then the springing ascent of two steps at a time.

"All in the dark, old fellow?" cried the clear, kindly voice, and the very presence seemed to bring a refreshment to every restless pulse. "I was detained far beyond any expectation. They are in sorrow over at Chester House, yet it is not sorrow without a certain blessed hope."

He stirred the fire and lighted the lamp deftly as any woman could have done it. Winchester raised himself a little on his elbow. There was something in Olmstead's face, a sort of tender, yet lofty serenity, that touched him.

"In sorrow?" he repeated vaguely. "Your friend Miss Disbrowe?"

"The loss is Mrs. Duane's. Her sister has crossed over the narrow border, and is at home in the other country. So peacefully did she go that it was just as one leaves a room unnoticed, and you are hardly aware of the fact until you glance up and see the vacant place. They were all there. Miss Eastwood came last night. Miss Barclay has been growing weaker every day; but she seemed to brighten unusually to-day, and take a vivid interest in the incidents of the morning. Miss Eastwood sat reading to her this afternoon, 'In Memoriam.' I believe she gave her the last smile at a verse she particularly enjoyed. Then she closed her eyes, and seemed to sleep peacefully. As I entered the room

Rhea bent over her caressingly, and learned the sad fact; no, let us call it, rather, a blessed exchange from pain and mortal weakness to the grand certainty of the new life. And that is why I stayed. There were many things to consider. Have you been lonely?"

"I missed you, yes. It would be ungracious to deny it. But I am aware that others have claims—and I must learn to do without you. I have a misgiving that you are staying a good deal on my account, now that you are released from your other duties."

"Partly. And I have been interested in Chester House. This change has not been unexpected, and on it depended the other change. Mrs. Duane and her charge will go to the city for the winter. Miss Barclay will be buried at Greenfields; it was her wish."

"And Miss Disbrowe?"

"She goes also."

"And Chester House will be closed again? You know better now than I, Olmstead — is there any talk of selling it? But in any event I suppose I would stand no chance," Winchester declared bitterly.

Olmstead took several turns up and down the room at a soft, leisurely pace.

"See here, Winchester," he said persuasively,

"make Miss Eastwood a fair, manly offer about it. I do not know how bitter the old dispute was, but can't you do your part toward healing the breach?"

Winchester compressed his lips, and steely gleams flashed from his eyes.

"You are dreaming about the millennium, Olmstead! I may as well tell you—you know the worst of me, and very little good. Like a fool, I asked her to marry me! She seemed one of the cold, self-contained girls, and—yes, I was a little smitten, but back of it was the desire for Chester House. I dare say she saw the object too plainly. Any woman would have resented it. I do not hold malice for that. I didn't fully understand her mother's feeling, but I have thrown away my chance."

"And you loved her?"

Olmstead compelled himself to utter this in a steady tone. He held the key to something that had puzzled him. Since that one brief episode weeks ago, Sabrina had changed curiously toward him. A great distance had spread itself between. Even to-day, when she had been so sweet, he was still kept at one side by some fine art. Certainly there had been no lack of lovers in her life. Was there a hidden restraining influence?

Winchester considered several moments, and

the silence impressed Olmstead with a fatal certainty. Then he began slowly :—

“I’ve never known what love was in your sense of the word. I’ll be frank, Olmstead—I didn’t suppose I ever should acknowledge it, but by slow degrees I have been realizing the narrowness of my own life, its shallow cynicisms, its selfish unbeliefs. I’ve no faith in sick-bed repentances ; but when a man is suddenly taken out of his busy round, and day after day meets his true self, he learns what manner of man he really is, and feels the uselessness of his great struggle for some paltry things on which he has expended his whole energy, when right beside him is a contrast. Olmstead, I know you could have made your way among the things the world delights to honor. I know, too, that you have not taken up your calling for any sentimental love for it, or as one of the ways of earning a living. You have many gifts. Even in your profession you could reach up to the higher places. I admit frankly that you have access to a nobler, broader, truer life than the majority of men lead. And you are trying to lift others up to it. I sneered about the women who came to Chester House, you remember. Well, I have seen their good works, done simply and without any ostentation, hidden away in that secluded neighborhood. Calista is always

talking about them, and your Miss Disbrowe. If the world is ever to be redeemed, it will be by such work as that."

"'Loving thy neighbor as thyself.' Yes," rejoined Olmstead.

"I have strayed from my text. But I felt that I owed you the acknowledgment. You've been like a brother through this dreary time ; for it has been more dreary to me than you can imagine. It was not a bad idea to send the old monks to their cells to meditate upon themselves ; only they should have gone out in the world afterward and practised the lesson learned in solitude. We have a great deal of the larger philanthropy in our theories, but we wait for others to put it into practice. And now I'll come to your question. Whether I could have loved Miss Eastwood under some other circumstances no one can tell. We can't go over the old ways with the same fresh, untried feeling. I wanted her because I wanted Chester House. I was not anxious to marry any woman. Yet she was the most attractive girl I had ever met. Perhaps if I had put love first of all " —

"Take your chance now, Winchester. You see she has married no one else."

"This is one of the cases where there isn't any second chance. Don't you see the old blunder

would always rankle — on both sides. And I've come to have a curious ideal " —

Olmstead drew a long breath. There was no bond here, then, for him to respect.

"Of course you know I'm not ruined, although it will take some years to retrieve my losses. The old factory would have had to come down. It wasn't worth patching up. It wasn't worth the money my father paid for it, only those were exceptional times. I have come to hate Brentford. From the very first, nay, long before, I have been haunted with some such idea as they have started at Greenfields."

"Then, as I said, make your offer to Miss Eastwood. There is a reason why I wish it."

"Has she empowered you?"

"We have never exchanged a word on the subject. But I will be frank with you, Winchester. To-night, the last thing Miss Disbrowe said to me was, 'Ask your friend to make an offer for Chester House.' She would not answer a question after that."

"To be refused with derision," Winchester's pallor changed to scarlet.

"I think you will not be refused. Miss Disbrowe could not lend herself to any such scheme. I wish you knew her well" —

"I'm tired," Winchester rejoined in the pause.

"Fix me up, old fellow, and let us say good-night."

He was not angry. Olmstead could tell that by the tone. After some gentle ministrations he went softly out of the room, and left the sick man to the chaos of his thoughts. What charm had Miss Disbrowe that she could persuade that proud, self-centred Sabrina Eastwood to relinquish her hold on the estate? There were other offers he well knew. Some one, doubtless, would out-bid him. Did she mean this as a salve to her conscience, that she might feel more free to take the other?

"I will not do it," he said to himself. "I will go quite away somewhere, and begin a new life. The dead do not need any endeavor from me. What is there here that I should cling to?"

And yet he could not sleep. The want and longing filled every pulse.

Olmstead was wakeful as well. He fancied he held the key to some mysteries, but he would not allow himself to dream of their outcome. In any case he must be content. Another man might have questioned why he had not loved Pearl Disbrowe; but from the very first they had been such friends, always on the parallel lines of a true, earnest comradeship. How curiously he had been sent among them! The trust he had undertaken,

the assistance he had been to the two friendless women, the strange little episode with Rhea, and the good work that had grown out of it. And this latest event, that was like a reverent seal set to a summer full of good works; as if its fragrance had ascended to the very heavens, where one of their number had obtained an abundant entrance. It seemed not to have the shock and sorrow of an ordinary death. He had hated to leave them on this evening. Were they all at peace, he wondered.

Pearl and Sabrina had lingered a long while over the fire. Mrs. Duane had taken the child of her love to her heart, to fill the vacant place. They had all talked of what would be when they two were alone, until the mysterious journey had been robbed of the anguish with which it is too often fraught. It was the shock of grain fully ripe for the Master's harvest. How many times Miss Barclay had said, "When I am gone, I wish you would do this or that. You and Rhea must make a pilgrimage to Greenfields every summer. I shall be waiting for you."

Sabrina had been filled with awe at the thought of death. But it had come with the grand simplicity that would make it pleasant to remember, and in its sacredness the two girls planned out a little of the new life. They would both be

in the city together. Pearl, Mrs. Duane, and Rhea were to make a brief visit to Wendover presently, while Miss Eastwood looked up a pretty home for the two whose lives were joined by such a sacred bond. Rhea's musical education would be Sabrina's charge. There was no dream of a prodigy whose evolution would be that of a *prima donna*; but Rhea's voice had an extraordinary pathos well adapted to recitative, and touched with the pure passionateness of a delicate nervous temperament. Love and tenderness had aroused a capability that would have lain dormant in the hard stress of life. Her gratitude would keep her true to this mother-love.

They came around in the course of their talk to the future of Chester House. Why Pearl should have pleaded for Winchester she could not herself have told, except that the talks with Olmstead, as they wandered about the old garden or lingered on the porch, had made a deep impression upon her. It was a place to love, yet few modern people would feel drawn to it. She could imagine herself coming summer after summer, offering to others the rest and refreshment of its great trees, its shady walks, its quaint, quiet rooms. Not as a real gift, but set aside, just as it had been named in the first instance, — a "King's Country" for the toilworn and weary. But she should always think

of the man who had been crowded out. Down in her heart it seemed as if these two people might heal their differences, and — what was it she really wished for them? Past midnight Sabrina rose and took both of Pearl's hands in hers.

"Then," she said gravely, "if Hollis Winchester, knowing that he can have it, makes no sign, you will agree to my proposal? Why, Pearl, I have done so little good with my money! Those two poor women shamed me; they were so glad to give of their small fortune."

"Yes; then I will take it," Pearl answered with a strange tremble in her voice.

Two days after this they laid Miss Barclay in the spot she had chosen, where a tall white lilac was to wave over her in the summer. The neighbors joined to swell the small procession, and Parke Olmstead spoke words of gracious comfort. Rhea clung close to Mrs. Duane, and straightened up her fragile form with a sense of protecting love.

That evening, as Parke Olmstead was about to leave them, he handed Miss Eastwood a sealed note.

"I want to bespeak your kindness," he said in a low tone.

Sabrina went back to her corner by the wide fireplace and read the note with a flushed face and varying emotions. There was a sincerity and

manliness about it that touched her,—an apology for his ill-considered blunder of the past. For some moments she seemed to sit in breathless suspense. Then she read and reread, taking courage. It was not the language of a man who had any lingering hope. He made no appeal to her tenderness, but he admitted frankly his love for the home doubly sacred to him in that it held all his memories of his mother. He had understood the place was in the market. Would she state her price and the terms, and allow him to enter the list of the claimants?

She folded her letter and sat in silent meditation. There were other things she could do for Pearl. And there had come to her a change not yet fully comprehended by herself. A wider outlook to life, a feeling that she was not content to draw to herself all the uses and benefits of life unglorified by any higher purpose than mere enjoyment. This link that connected her with wider interests and purposes, also brought to her new duties. It was very easy to love her neighbor as herself when that neighbor was Stacy Delamater or Pearl Disbrowe: it was easy to be generous when inclination ran in the same channel; but when that shrank back and fortified itself with excuses, did she really forgive? Was there still some hatred and uncharitableness?

Sabrina gave a vague, intangible smile. She was holding to her mother's feud. What if, in that far country, her mother saw the unwisdom of it? She had really wondered at it. Her quarrel with Hollis Winchester was that he had shown her too plainly that he was ready to marry her to get Chester House, because it was the one spot he loved. He had honorably offered her more than its value then, and she had scornfully refused. And here he had apologized in such a manly manner, so enfranchised from any suggestion of love, that in spite of herself her heart softened. If she was to begin a new life, was not this one of the crucial points? The old line came back to her. She had given up a possibility; if it had been meant for her, would the sacrifice have been placed so plainly in her way?

Pearl and Mr. Olmstead leaned to Mr. Winchester's side. Sometimes she felt strangely jealous. If he came largely into their lives, must not she be barred out? Yet they were to go away; he would be here alone. Would he come here—sit in this corner maybe, poke the fire into fitful flashes, and dream about his mother? He would take a hand in the new town—to make money of course; her lip curled a little. Would it better her life to stand in his way? She rose presently, and, kissing Pearl, who sat crocheting a fluffy mass

of silk and wool, went to her room. The fire was burning dreamily upon the hearth, just as it had down-stairs. She almost loved the place at the very moment when she had decided to put away her right forever.

She drew out her desk and wrote her note, brief, business-like. She stated what the Land Improvement Society had offered her, and intimated that there had been some speculative inquiries. She had decided, also, to consider any offer he might make. (She wondered if that would appear grasping to him.) Then she referred to the circumstances that had enhanced its money value, but had in no wise increased her estimation of it. He must consider his own interest in the place.

She sealed her note and took it down to Amos Pike, who went over early for the mail. There was no opportunity of changing her mind, but at breakfast the next morning a letter from her guardian lay beside her plate. It upbraided her in rather severe terms. Her dilatoriness had prevented an excellent bargain. He did not mention that his own high figure, increased since the first proposal, had been a factor as well. He briefly advised her to take the other offer, as purely speculative values were falling, and the furore about the new town was dying

out, he had been informed. Sabrina drew a breath of relief.

Meanwhile, plans were being rapidly formed for the impending change. Pearl and Sabrina made a trip to the city, to secure an apartment suitable for Mrs. Duané and Rhea, and arrange for the furnishing. Mrs. Vantine had gone to Tuxedo in something of a huff, declaring that she shouldn't be surprised if Sabrina married Winchester after all! The Eastwoods had a queer streak in them, and Sabrina had changed beyond everything. It seemed to be the fashion for young women to take up queer fads, as if marrying was a sort of secondary matter, to fall back upon when they had tired of everything else.

Mr. Vantine was so engrossed in some new schemes, that he simply advised Sabrina to make the best bargain that she could, since she had not seized the opportune moment.

"There will be no more a 'King's Country,'" Sabrina said on their return. The air of desolation about the place struck her. The summer was gone. Even the serene, ripening autumn had faded. This day in early November prefigured winter. She shuddered at the wind through the bare trees, at the heaps of leaves and the withered grass.

"The kingdom of Heaven is within you," Pearl made answer. "And we shall find it at Wendover. We shall find it many times, I trust."

"I am not sure that I should like to leave you here after all;" and Sabrina paused on the porch. "It is strange, but I am quite reconciled to the new ownership. Yours is the chief loss, Pearl. How shall I make it up to you?"

"It will be made up tenfold."

"You are so content. Let us go in and read our fate."

It was there awaiting her. After a long struggle Hollis Winchester's affection for his old home had conquered. With her permission he would be over the next day to arrange terms.

CHAPTER XVI

AND IN THAT COUNTRY ABIDE THE FAITHFUL

THE dreary day had passed without a storm. The sun was shining with a hazy light, a suggestion of Indian summer. It lay warm on the old garden, and in sheltered places there were clusters of pansies still abloom, and some late flowers; while the old box borders wore their perennial green.

In both rooms great log-fires were burning. Even the hall had a cheerful warmth; and there was a great jar of clematis and bitter-sweet, the red berries intermingling with the soft grayish white furze. The hammocks had been swung in-doors, and gave a cosey look.

It was Pearl who came to meet Olmstead and his friend Hollis Winchester. Pale from his long confinement, and still leaning heavily on his cane, he crossed the hall, and followed her into the familiar room, changed, yet strangely the same. He glanced furtively about, then his eyes returned to his gracious hostess, who begged

them to be seated, and was glad he had so far recovered. She would summon Miss Eastwood.

"Not just yet, please," Winchester said. Olmstead was watching him closely. Was it the sight of the old house that so moved him, or the thought of meeting—the hesitation of meeting—Sabrina Eastwood.

"You have enjoyed the place this summer?" he began awkwardly.

"It has been delightful—to us all. Yet I think I can understand your deeper regard for it, Mr. Winchester. And I am glad it is to come back to you."

She was standing by the corner of the wide chimney, and the blaze threw up her figure in artistic relief, giving her fair face a touch of warmth, a tenderness that he remembered seeing once in a Madonna by some modern painter. The voice stirred him curiously.

"Thank you."

What a stick she must think him, to have no more to say than that! But his tongue seemed numbed by some strange spell.

Olmstead came to his relief, and asked how it had fared with Pearl's errand to the city.

They had been very successful. They had found a pretty suite of partly furnished rooms in a very desirable neighborhood; and only the home-

like accessories would need to be added. But Mrs. Duane and Rhea were to make a visit at Wendover before their essay at housekeeping. Rhea would begin with her music and singing lessons as soon as they were settled in the city. And only this morning a letter had come from Miss Searle, who was pleasantly situated and content.

Olmstead had placed a chair for Miss Disbrowe, but she had only rested her hand lightly on the back of it. Winchester was glad she did not sit down. The slim, graceful figure was like a picture. The slight movements were so harmonious, the expressions of her fine face so attractive. She was like a dream that haunted one, or a strain of music that recurred frequently, and one could always remember. If he never saw her again, he should be able to recall every rare point, the delicate expressions of her face when she spoke.

She turned to him presently. It was as if she had given him time to recover from the first awkwardness of a return to Chester House.

"We have all been so interested in your recovery," she began. "And I am glad you came to-day; for we go away so soon. We have had a happy summer in your old house," glancing up with eyes that had a soft radiance in them.

He flushed with a sense of shame. How he

had hated their coming here! He had never been near the place, and heretofore it had been his Sunday morning ride, with a curious solemnity, like that of church-going. "Your old house." How tenderly the words fell from her lips!

"I hope you will leave a breath of the happiness," he returned almost abruptly. "The place will be the better to me because you all have been here" — yes, he would include them all, though her presence alone would have sanctified it.

"Will you see Miss Eastwood now, Winchester? This is the longest ride he has taken," turning to Pearl in an explanatory fashion, "and I had strict injunctions not to tire him out."

She smiled and went to summon Sabrina. Olmstead paced up and down the room until he heard the soft stir of the trailing silken gown in the hall. He just spoke as he pressed her hand.

"Miss Disbrowe," he said, "come and have a walk in the old garden."

Winchester rose and leaned against the chair-back. His illness had changed him greatly. He looked older, and the dominant imperiousness had gone out of his face. His hand that hung against the cushion was as white as her own, and much thinner.

"I owe you a boundless debt of gratitude," and there was the strain of emotion in his voice.

"Let me say it before I lose courage, Miss Eastwood. I have not deserved this recognition at your hands. I have been obstinate and wrong-headed enough to fight against established facts. I was a boor and a bully that time, two years and more ago," and his face turned almost swarthy with the remembrance. "I sincerely beg your pardon. I want you to know that I regret it, that I would take back every rude and unjust word if I could. I have changed my own opinion of myself since then."

She bowed her head in acknowledgment. He stood there in the agonizing mortification of a culprit, quite at her mercy. True, she had offered to be merciful, else he had not dared to come at all.

She was more beautiful than when he had seen her before; but it was not the beauty that moved him,—the kind of princess-like elegance, the high-bred face, the perfection of training in every line, the subtle coldness that could wither one with its glance. And he had once imagined she might marry him! What utter idiocy had possessed him?

She came straight to the point. Other men had asked her in marriage, and this incident was no triumph to remember. In fact, just now, she did not think of it.

"You considered the proposal," she began in

her clear, trained tone. "The Land Improvement Company made it in the summer. My guardian did not think it exorbitant" —

She felt at that moment she would like to offer it back for half the money. Something in his air and attitude touched, — a kind of manly humility.

"And I thought if it was to be sold, you should have a chance with" —

That was not quite true. She flushed a little.

"It is more consideration than I had any right to expect. And I am glad to purchase my old home at any price. I may — nay, I shall have to ask for a little favor in some respects. I contemplate a change in all my business relations, which will take time. And my physician insists upon a long holiday. When we have settled this I shall go away for some weeks, and not take up my new life until later on. But if you do not object to this being concluded now" —

He raised his eyes to her calm, fair face.

"I should like it finished. We are all going away. The house would be shut up."

"And I may take possession?"

"Whenever you like."

"Shall I send some one in the city to see Mr. Vantine?"

"It would be better. Still, if you prefer, I will make my part of the bargain secure here and

now ; then I shall have no opportunity to repent ;” Miss Eastwood said in a softer tone.

“ You do not mean — I had thought you did not care for Chester House ? ” What if she had come to a curious regard for it ?

“ I should never be likely to live here. I have no tender associations with it. All the interest has been in this summer. I do not think it could ever be repeated.”

She moved toward the desk, and opened it. As she did so her eye caught sight of Pearl and Olmstead wandering about the faded garden. Would any other woman ever fit so into the old-time pleasance ? What plans had they ? Was there something between the three that she was shut out of ? Would they have a life, a joy quite outside of anything she could give.

Winchester came over to the desk and wrote. It did not look like his usual decisive business hand. Then he laid down a check, and she gave him a receipt, and signed the other paper.

“ Will you go out with them ? ” she asked, making a little gesture.

“ Yes.” He picked up his cane, and she saw that he walked carefully and with an effort.

“ Would Thursday suit you ? ” he asked. “ I will come over with my lawyer. I will send to Mr. Vantine to-day.”

"Very well." She left him at the end of the hall. He found when he stepped out on the sunshiny porch that he was alone. But Pearl Disbrowe came and gave him a welcoming smile that kindled a sudden warmth in every pulse.

"Am I to congratulate you?" she asked.

"That I have won back my birthright? No; let me be honest," and he took the hand so cordially outstretched, while a smile answered hers, that illumined his face, — a smile no one had ever seen there before, and he was unconscious of the great gladness it expressed. "We were all in the wrong, and the Eastwoods were right. But my father believed it otherwise, and lived up to his belief. Still, he would never have touched a dollar of another man's money or his goods. He was a sternly upright man, and blinded by his great love for what he had been trained to consider his. But I am grateful to your friend;" he glanced from one to the other.

Pearl colored vividly, and there was a fascinating softness in her eyes.

"I am very glad for your sake."

They turned into the old paths. What was there about this woman, that could touch the edges of awkwardness and straightway glorify them into friendly converse? She moved him with a strange sympathy; she had such a love for the

simple things of nature. If the fair ghost of his mother could come back — but this one had a more radiant beauty. Yes, he would always be glad she had been here. There would be two ghosts to call up in this old garden. Of course Olmstead meant to marry her — perhaps they would both come and partake of the cheer by his fireside.

Pearl found Miss Eastwood in her room when the two men were gone.

“Oh,” she cried, throwing herself on the hassock and leaning her arms on Sabrina’s knee, “do you repent? Have I persuaded you against your will, your better judgment?”

“Against my will, yes,” and she smiled; “against my better judgment, no. For I understand that it is in *all* things, not in the one thing that pleases us. I have not been such a poor scholar, Pearl, believe me. And if I have resolved to take the ‘better way,’ I must not turn aside to follow selfish, prideful whims. I can do something else for you if ever that time comes. Last evening it looked so dreary that I was quite reconciled; and through the winter we should have done nothing with it. I am glad the thing is settled, — that the old dispute is ended. And, Pearl, I do not believe you were as much in love with the place as with the people.”

"Some of those we take with us. It has been a happy summer; but perhaps both of us have another place in the world. We are to go on to the next things, not sit apart waiting for them to come to us. And you have given a greater happiness, done a higher work this morning, than any I might have accomplished."

"Pearl, why are you — so moved at Winchester's gratification? It is his purely personal pleasure. If he were like Parke Olmstead" — she colored vividly.

"There is a turning-point in some lives, and Mr. Olmstead thinks it has come to him. Just a little this way or that," Pearl made a dainty gesture with her hand. "There are so many that help or hinder, and one would like to think afterward that one had helped."

"If you will let me make it up to you" — ah, when the greatest of all joy came to her, what was there that Sabrina Eastwood could add? She would not even be a poor clergyman's wife.

"You shall make it up to me an hundred-fold. You see, I am going to trust you for the time to come," and Pearl smiled tenderly.

The rest of the day was busy enough. By Saturday they would be out of the old house. Pearl, Mrs. Duane, and Rhea going for a short stay at Wendover, Miss Eastwood to the city.

On Thursday Mr. Vantine sent his lawyer and all necessary papers, but could not come, as he was in the midst of a big railroad deal. Winchester, with his friend and a notary, and Sabrina Eastwood, signed away the estate that had cost her mother so much struggling and heart-burning, and at last a thrill of triumphant vengeance. Did it matter any to poor mamma now? If she, Sabrina, was to begin a new life, why should she hamper it with the old burdens?

Winchester reached out and took her hand as he was going away. But he hesitated over the words he meant to say, and looked into her eyes with a wordless satisfaction.

"Don't thank me," she cried. "If you are ever grateful to any one, it must be Pearl Disbrowe. I offered the place to her for any benevolent purpose she might desire, and she resigned in your favor. Between us it has been the merest business. But I shall be glad if you are happy here, and you have your heart's desire."

He stood amazed, confused. Miss Eastwood slipped away. It was Pearl to whom he said good-by, and she wondered at the depth of feeling.

Did Olmstead know of this, and approve? Well, there was something nobler in human nature than he had believed. He had bent so many

events to his own selfish purposes and aims. This had come to him in a way he had least expected. It had a new and strange sacredness.

It was curious to go back to the life she had stepped out of last June, Sabrina Eastwood found. The house had been put in its usual elegant order. Mrs. Vantine was away. Mr. Vantine welcomed her.

"My dear Sabrina," he said as they sat at their dinner, "I do not think you made a wonderful bargain — women haven't that faculty. But the old house will soon need a good deal of repairing and modernizing, and you never get back the money you spend. What a pity it wasn't just *in* the new town! Suburban property is one of the things you can never be certain about; it may lie unproductive for years. And I have such a fine investment for your money. I am sorry you didn't squeeze Winchester a little harder, and make him pay down more, but I suppose he pleaded misfortunes and all that, and you were tender-hearted?"

She had let him make his own terms. What would Mr. Vantine say if he had known of her wish to donate the house to a charity.

"Mr. Winchester has been unfortunate," she answered briefly.

"Yes; but, my dear girl, if one set out to pity

all the unfortunate people, one would need to have a long purse indeed. And I dare say in a few years he will make a big profit on the land. Seventy acres! Well, right here in the city it would be tremendous;" and he laughed with unction.

Sabrina was very glad of a few days' quiet in which to arrange her future a little. It would be different — it *must* be different. The old round of fashion and admiration and pleasure no longer satisfied her. There were higher, purer joys; there was a dread accountability she could not throw off carelessly. 'To whom much was given much would be required.' She could not evade. Much had been given to her. Not wealth merely. She had all the strength and richness of youth, she had many womanly gifts, as she was beginning to understand, — To grow brave and thoughtful, to make the higher virtues attractive, to win others to find pleasure and sweet reward in aims worth living for. An ideal had been suddenly awakened in her, but this, like the sunshine, must warm and revivify those without, or it will prove of no avail.

She had supposed she would be married presently; nearly all girls were, and she had not lacked opportunities hitherto. But marriage has a new sanctity in her eyes. It is not because she and

Pearl have discussed it — lovers have been quite outside of their summer's efforts. She has simply seen a sweet, outgiving woman, too essentially true to flirt, and a man who has been "about his Master's business," but whose truth and nobleness would glorify any life, perhaps. She will not be silly enough to hold herself aloof, to decline a comforting friendship, because the love might have been offered and was not. When the time comes she will rejoice in their happiness.

Meanwhile, she must make beautiful the new truths that have found a foothold in her soul. There are girls and women in her very circle who are longing to be uplifted, encouraged, who cannot well go out of it any more than she. A warm, sympathetic attitude will bring them together, cheer them, render possible the good work Pearl has been doing. One need not go to the slums. It is "Whatsoever thy hand findeth." And she is to make religion look lovely in her own circle, to win others, to help those who are weakly struggling, who long to believe and do. Can she show by her living that she has been in the King's Country?

CHAPTER XVII

WITH SKIES SERENE

THE season was at its height. There were teas, receptions, some notable weddings, — the Patriarchs' and the Batchelors,' where the young "buds" were crowding in eagerly.

Mrs. Vantine was distinctly captious. Other chaperons had married off their charges, and were patronizing elegant brides. Sabrina was twenty-four, and had been in society six years. It was mortifying, to say the least.

Yet, she admitted to herself that Sabrina had never been more beautiful, seldom as gracious. The little touch of coldness had often kept people at a distance. It was very well with your inferiors, and with the *nouveaux riches*, but Sabrina had unconsciously carried it to extremes where men were concerned. And now she would surely be relegated to a second or third place, with these new "fads."

"It *is* mortifying when we have both done our best for her," said Mrs. Vantine complainingly

to her husband. "You have doubled her money, and I have given her every advantage. The next thing will be her going over to one of those 'settlements,' where you live with the poor and nurse them and wait on them. My opinion is that we pamper the poor too much. They ought to be set to work."

"Yes," said her husband indifferently, studying the list of stocks.

Mrs. Vantine sighed.

"I shall give a dance for the young people," she began presently. "We have been fearfully dull this winter. And there are only three weeks more of the season. I felt sure Sabrina would be married by this Easter. If she will be so obstinate" —

Mr. Vantine began to doze.

But Miss Eastwood had not found it stupid. True, she had not danced as much, not tired herself over trivialities. She had gone a little out of the old paths. With a delicate consideration she managed to bring pleasures to the fresh young souls who, in the first dawn of delight, could not believe in any hollowness. Some who had considered her cold and exclusive, warmed to her, glanced at her wistfully, entreated little favors with hesitation, then adored her in so new a manner that Sabrina was surprised. Could she win

others to love her as Stacy had? Could she be a friend to young girls, and influence them if even a little in the way of a more serious womanhood? It seemed to her as if the world was waking up on the subject, but it was only that her eyes were opened to discern earnest souls, such as there had been from the beginning. There was more heart even in conventional charity than she had believed.

Pearl had been called away by the illness of her brother, and then had gone to Florida with him and his wife. Sabrina had to welcome Mrs. Duane and induct her into her new home, to which she had added some gifts besides the piano. She studied Mrs. Duane with a new interest. The graces and dignity of her old-fashioned formalisms became her so well. She could recall some of the grandmothers in society who had just this quaint refinement, supposed to be an inheritance of blue blood. A little prosperity and happiness had worked a wonderful transformation. How much was wasted everywhere that might go far toward redeeming worthy people, instead of leaving them to want, misery, and despair.

Rhea's bright dark eyes spoke eloquently; yet her nature was not effusive. There had not been much sentiment among those with whom her

early life had been spent, though they were often kind to each other. But no matter how intensely your soul went into your work, it was mere commodity, and paid for by the money. You could not stop for sympathy, relentless toil hurried you on at such a pace.

Wendover had been a revelation to Rhea Vasilis. She felt as if she had lived years since that close summer morning when she had fainted at her work. Oh, what a delightful world it was, and she was so glad to live in it! She did not mind being small and dark and lame, even when there were so many beautiful women and girls in the world. She had a home in one dear heart, with all her imperfections.

Sabrina visited them, took them out in the carriage, and to several matinees that filled the child with speechless delight. She could only thank Miss Eastwood with eyes shining in tears that would have overflowed at a word.

Were there not others pining for a little pleasure in their dreary round. Why, she had never thought of it before!

One day Rhea looked wistfully at her as she seated herself in the pretty room and began to ask about her music practising.

"I am going on very well, I believe, though perhaps I shall not come up to your highest

hopes of me. I try my best. And the lessons in designing are a pleasure. But I keep thinking all the time it is so much for me to ~~have~~, and the long hours of delightful leisure, the books to read, and all the ease " —

"My dear child, you surely do not want to go back to the old life?" Miss Eastwood asked in surprise.

"Oh, no. And yet the work wasn't so bad when one was well. It was the terrible living. One day I went in to see some of the girls. There were two—if Miss Disbrowe had been here I should have asked her. I do not want to displease either of you " —

Rhea hesitated, and turned from pale to red.

"You surely did not go back to work?"

Rhea shook her head. "Though I found I could sell some designs, and that gave me courage to — to bring these poor girls here. They were living in an attic — rents are so high for the very poor, you know. And there was a room I could let them have. Mrs. Duane agreed. We had called it Miss Pearl's room. But when she comes I can give her mine. And O Miss Eastwood! you can hardly imagine the pleasure the few evenings they have been here. And the meals — so different from the little you can fix in your haste in the morning, and you come home so tired at night

that you hardly care. It is the being with somebody, the pleasant talk, the interest, that is such a comfort. And they are such nice girls. One is an orphan, and the other has a wretched, drunken father who used to beat her and turn her out-of-doors. And they pay what it cost them to live there. But you see I shouldn't want to spend Mrs. Duane's money on them, and I shall help it out. You will not think it" —

Rhea's lip quivered.

"My dear child, I think it very kind and lovely in you and Mrs. Duane:"

"I shall not neglect anything. I wanted you to feel that your plans for me would be kept steadily in my mind. But when I had so much" —

Had she learned her lesson so quickly? Pearl's kindness was bringing in fourfold. And she, Sabrina, had once wondered if you were not likely to injure these people by taking them out of their narrow sphere. Who is least among you shall be greatest. Sabrina felt humbled by this simple endeavor. Yes, the greatest of all was to take another into the very heart of things.

Not just now, but in the future, half a dozen years perhaps, when she should have become quite settled, and the question of marriage set aside, what if she were to make a home for some of the least of these who had missed their opportunity or

been crowded out of it! Girls with aching hearts and longing desires for beauty and improvement, who had gifts and tastes above the average, as this little Rhea. She could not keep Pearl as her exclusive friend. Pearl's destiny was surely settled. Yes, she was glad she had stood aside, and not marred so lovely a purpose.

For in Florida the Disbrowes had stumbled over Olmstead and Winchester. Pearl had said a good deal about Winchester in her recent letters, but been delicately silent as to Olmstead. Sabrina fancied she could read between the lines. Yes, Stacy had been right. And she had so much that surely she need not grudge this blessing to another. Yet there was a sudden, strange loneliness stretching out before her.

On a late winter afternoon she sat pouring tea at one of the very elegant occasions where she was among the hostesses by special invitation. Her table had been a centre of attraction among men a little tired of the *ingénue*. They had been discussing some of the problems of the day, and people were beginning to consider Miss Eastwood curiously entertaining.

Some one crossed the large room with an air and bearing that seemed suddenly to freshen the languid atmosphere. She felt the presence in every pulse before she even raised her eyes. He

held out his hand and took hers in a warm, eager pressure that sent the blood thrilling through every pulse.

"I wondered if I should find you," Parke Olmstead said in a low but inspiriting tone. "We just came in this morning. And you should see Winchester! You would hardly know him. There has been something beside mere pleasure, but that was very delightful. I have so much to tell you. Have you a cup of tea for me?"

It was quite late, and the women were thinning out. Even some of the men had the dinner hour in mind. Olmstead helped himself to a chair, so near that no one could come between.

She handed him his tea. "And Pearl?" she asked almost under her breath.

"Very well, but longing for her Northern friends and her work." He smiled a little. "I am to report everything to her at once. I have been spending an hour with Mrs. Duane. How cosey they are in their little nest! And how pretty Miss Vasilis has grown! Then I was to lose no time in seeing you. Pearl has hungered for the very sight of you."

"Pearl!" He did not say Miss Disbrowe. He must feel very much at home with her. Sabrina made a great effort. Was not this the thing she had assented to in her secret heart? Why should it move her thus?

"When is she coming?" Oh, if she were here this very instant Sabrina would feel stronger.

"The Disbrowes are to take a fortnight's journeying about, perhaps longer, though Mr. Disbrowe considers himself entirely recovered. I should have gone with them; but Winchester had his head so full of plans, and there was some important business. I have something to tell you about Pearl — she gave me permission, and I am to ask a great favor." He smiled mysteriously, talking low and in a rapid tone of voice.

The picturesque throng surged to and fro. Miss Eastwood poured tea in her quiet, elegant fashion; and two or three rather elderly bachelors thought what an admirable mistress she would make, and wondered that no man had carried her off. Olmstead watched her also. There was a softened beauty, a suggestion of vital warmth and interest, quite new. A group of girls came to bid her adieu, and she gave them an exquisite smile.

"What do you do this evening?" he asked presently.

"There is a musicale and supper at Mrs. Selwyn's. The music is for a child's charity." Should she offer him a ticket?

"And I am to take supper at Mrs. Duane's. Well — in the morning — are you disengaged?"

"No," she answered softly. She was glad to

put it off even a little while. "But at three, if it suits you" —

"Yes."

Miss Eastwood's carriage was announced.

She disappeared with a gracious nod, and presently came down-stairs in a soft, furry wrap. How beautiful she was! Would a man dare ask her to come over to the work-day world?

"Allow me," and he handed her to her carriage. There was a long, questioning look in his eyes that brought a cruel confusion to cheek and pulse, and she was glad, yes, strangely glad, to get away. It meant nothing, she told herself, only a friend's joy at meeting an old friend. It was her foolish weakness. Surely she *was* overliving it. But the interview had come so suddenly.

Sabrina Eastwood would not have been surprised if he had found his way to Mrs. Selwyn's. But he did not, and she grew stronger, calmer. Surely Pearl had given back tenfold for the one little thing she had taken, that had been meant for her from the beginning. Because she could give it up to her friend, she knew she was a worthier woman.

She was very busy the next morning, perhaps needlessly so. There were some guests in to luncheon. She was lingering in Mrs. Vantine's

room with two of the ladies when Parke Olmstead's card was brought up.

He was standing near a Madonna, by quite a modern painter, who had managed to put the most exquisite mother-love in Mary's eyes. So rapt was he that he did not hear the light step; but as she paused he felt her presence and turned, taking both her hands in his. A curious, untranslatable expression wavered over the fair face, and she withdrew them, made a gesture of exquisite grace that he followed, and seated himself by the richly draped window, while she sat a little apart. There was a momentary silence. Perhaps he had been over-hasty.

"About Pearl?" she said in a gravely sweet tone. "Though I fancied—and she is worthy of the highest joy." Her voice broke in a little confusion, for she felt his eyes upon her.

"She hesitated a little on your account, I do believe. I did not dream of such a thing! I think he fell in love with her in the old garden, and you gave him the key yourself in her renunciation of Chester House. And he wants to see you. He has changed so much. He will be as strong on the right side as he was in selfish indifference. You conquered his pride when you allowed him to go back to Chester House as its master."

"He? Do you mean Hollis Winchester?"
A mist swam before Sabrina Eastwood's eyes.

"I thought you fancied — that Pearl must have told her secret unwittingly. Sabrina!"

Her face was scarlet. She made a movement to turn it away.

"Sabrina," Olmstead cried, "did you think because we were co-workers and pilgrims on the same road that" — why had he not loved Pearl Disbrowe? He could not tell — they had been too good friends, too good comrades, for the thought of love. And he had been so interested in watching the unfolding process of this other. Would he ask too much in asking her love.

"I love you," he said with a man's singleness of purpose. "I might hesitate in asking you to share poverty. But out of our abundance can we not make glad the hearts of some poor pilgrims struggling along the byways? Can we not be righteous stewards of what God has given us both? Will you come into my life, and make it stronger to spread abroad the great gladness of Him who loved us while we were yet strangers?"

He had risen, and by some earnest power had impelled her to her feet. She was blushing and trembling, yet all the sacredness of his meaning dawned upon her.

"Oh," she cried in great humility, "are you quite sure? Do you think I might take up that high life? I have gone such a little way. I have stumbled so often."

" 'He giveth liberally. No good thing will he withhold.' My darling, I think there is a great need of light shining in the high places, of making religion attractive to those who know pleasure as only an enjoyment of self. The poor cannot go to the rich, but the rich might go to each other, when they have learned of Him who is the Maker of us all. I have been watching your unfolding. I long to gather the fragrant blossoms, to make sweet all my life, to help and sustain when the paths are hard, the rewards scanty."

She had been waiting all these years, she knew now. And, as Parke Olmstead once said, he had gone round the world to find her, and in the fitness of time heart had answered heart.

"But Pearl!" she exclaimed presently. "I can't quite understand" —

"He was curiously interested in her. And she is harmoniously adjusted to Chester House. He is a peculiar man, with some splendid possibilities. Pearl is so perfectly honest and upright, but she will never make truth unattractive. It is just the influence he needs. And they will help build up

the King's Country, while you will have your wish for her."

Could she have taken this great happiness and left Pearl without the gates? Was it weak to be thankful that she had not been tried "as by fire."

A day or two after he brought in Hollis Winchester. It was a trifle awkward at first, and Sabrina felt they needed Pearl to make the fine accord. But why should not she? If their parents had bequeathed them an unfortunate feud, why could not they rise superior to it? Why could not she, since she had entered that great realm where —

"Love seeketh not itself to please."

Olmstead made an excuse to go off and inspect Mrs. Vantine's new palms and ferns, very rare and very costly.

"You redeemed Chester House by asking Miss Disbrowe there," Winchester said, as they dropped into a less conventional talk. "Yet at first I was absolutely angry; I thought it desecrated. And I was afraid you would donate it to some charity," smiling vaguely. "But Pearl is to do as she likes about asking in poor wayfarers. I suppose I shall always be a business-man, and delight in the thick of the fray. I have come to look at some things in a different light, however, and I see

- clearly that a man's first duty as a citizen is not to make paupers and criminals for his country. I haven't believed much in any God but self. When you meet a man like Olmstead, who lives up to what he preaches, who absolutely glorifies his religion," — he paused abruptly, and his thin face flushed — he had not quite come up to the old mark of robustness. "I hope you will both be very happy. Pearl hoped nothing would prevent. She thought you two people could do so much for the uplifting of humanity."

"Thank you," Sabrina said rather tremulously. Then she gave him her hand. He raised it a little, then pressed his lips reverently upon it, and the old bitterness vanished from both souls.

"Though how I shall ever make my peace with Stacy," Sabrina said afterward to Olmstead, "I hardly know. And I cannot understand how Pearl—how Winchester, even, was won to a higher life and aim, as he must have been to satisfy her."

"It is one of the mysteries. And I dare say people will wonder why, out of an admiring host, you have linked your life with mine" —

"And why you should have chosen me," she rejoined with a radiant smile.

Mrs. Vantine was not at all certain that she approved of Sabrina's engagement. A clergyman

was so out of the usual line. To be sure, Parke Olmstead was well connected, had a comfortable income of his own, and was a cultivated and irreproachable gentleman, who never confused truth with rudeness, or ill-timed brusquerie with wit. A man to make his mark and carry weight with his simple directness, but who would not be easily turned aside from the high purposes to which he had dedicated his life, not from any passing impulse, but deliberate, earnest conviction.

"We talk a great deal about the heroic graces of the poor," he said one day, when they had been seeking to add a drop of comfort to some cups of bitterness. "We expect them to exercise all the virtues, and feel disappointed when they do not reach our high standard. Why should not someone in the plenitude of prosperity set them an example? We go to them with our kindnesses; why not sometimes bring them to us? Why not convince them that we also have learned the great truths we desire to teach them—the great commandment on which the divine Master set his seal, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

Miss Eastwood's engagement, for it was announced immediately, made quite a flutter in her circle. Mr. Olmstead's private means saved it from being considered reprehensible, and his undeniable force of character would have brought

him respect in any station of life. Sabrina went her way serenely, and allowed Mrs. Vantine to reap all the pleasure possible, since the marriage was to take place in the spring.

Honors came to Parke Olmstead, and sometimes he smilingly wondered how much of this was due to the magical glamour of wealth. Money was a power; he was not the man to deny that. He, of all others, could afford to work in the by-ways. And yet, was there not a great deal to be done among his own brethren? Was not the "Light that lightened the Gentiles" also to be "a glory among my people Israel"? Not a mere name, not a garment of complacency, but a "glory."

Pearl Disbrowe came back in April. And when she shared Miss Eastwood's luxurious home, with all that wealth could bestow of pictures, statuary, silken hangings, and soft carpets, rare china, servants trained to the utmost nicety, as if her little world almost moved of itself. "Oh," she cried, "how plain and bare Chester House must have looked to you! And yet you never made us feel that you really missed anything. And at Aunt Jane's you adapted yourself so readily! Sabrina, I think you will be just the apostle to stand on the midway, with a hand stretched out to each, asking one to come up, and the other

to go across. There were times when I felt almost afraid you would make some mistake; but I knew Mr. Olmstead loved you, and he was not the kind of man to relinquish any aim easily."

"But I thought—Pearl, you would fill the position with more wisdom—a greater understanding of human needs. How shall I grow into that?" and Sabrina's eyes were suffused with an earnest, tender light.

"He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not," Pearl Disbrowe answered reverently.

There were many other things to talk about. What Aunt Jane and Stacy were doing; the pretty home at Mrs. Duane's, and the curious charm Rhea was beginning to exercise; how one thing had grown out of another; how a little good seed was being planted all the time, and that, in God's watchful care, none of it was ever lost.

Stacy and Aunt Jane came up to the wedding. It was one of the "events of the season," much grander than Sabrina liked; but Mrs. Vantine would have it so, and the younger gave in to the elder woman's pleasure. Mr. Vantine was quite strenuous about tying up Sabrina's fortune; clergymen were always poor financiers, he had understood.

"As if there could be mine or thine," said Sabrina with tears in her eyes.

"He is quite right, my darling. Do you suppose, having you, I should disdain accepting anything distinctly from your hands?"

It was June again. Only a year, and so much had happened since the bevy of girls sat in that pretty "upper room" discussing summer pleasures. They were all here again, and many more, come to do honor to Stacy Delamater, who was this day to begin a year's journey through Europe, and the greater journey of that mysterious new life of marriage.

It had all come about so simply for the gay, vivacious girl who had many a time called a smile to Professor Farrand's face, a little graver than it should have been for his thirty years. But he always felt so at home with Mrs. Herrick. He dropped into his olden place; but presently he found a new and seductive atmosphere. Why, even Aunt Jane had changed! She found time to sit while Stacy read of wonderful places. What if they were all measured by Niagara? Occasionally he came in and added his wider experience, and watched the eager eyes, the changeful face, the desire of a wider and truer life that made itself felt in various other ways. Why, he had never remarked before her gentle consideration for Aunt Jane, her readiness to give of her best, her graceful ways! He blamed himself for considering her

frivolous and careless. He came in oftener; he hunted up books of rare engravings; he told her of picture galleries abroad, libraries, and churches. Then an excellent offer was made him to go abroad for a year for work in which he delighted. When all arrangements had been made and the matter talked over, he realized that it would be very hard to go away from this sweet girl. A dozen years lay between them, and he wondered if his love would suffice to make her happy!

Stacy was a good deal startled. It seemed a wonderful thing to happen to her. And to leave Aunt Jane!

But it all came about. And here was Stacy in her white wedding gown and bride roses, and the professor young and happy as he had never dreamed of being. And because she was going away, Pearl told her that some time *she* should go to Chester House, and in her way help in the great work of the world, with strong hands and an earnest soul to uphold hers.

"Oh!" Stacy cried, "I had set my heart on your marrying Mr. Olmstead, and I was almost angry that Sabrina was so beautiful and attractive, as if she meant to shine you down. Now I think it must have been ordained from the beginning. She can make goodness look lovely; she can tempt people to emulate her, and she suits Mr. Olmstead

to the very soul. Together they will do a great work. How is it that we have all come to look at the grander, the more serious, but not less happy side of life?"

There was a slight rustle in the hall. Sabrina paused in the doorway, looking more lovely than ever, smiled, and held out her hand.

"Because," Mrs. Olmstead said in her low, tender tone, "because, Stacy, you told us a year ago about the country of good works into which Pearl journeyed now and then. It was a lovely morning like this, full of the glory and beauty with which God clothes the earth. And I believe I owe much of my happiness to you, for it awoke within me a desire for better things. The 'King's Country,' you said; the new earth that one sees when the blur of worldliness has cleared away, and we have set ourselves to the true work that we may have only stumbled over before. And I think Pearl's will be grander than mine, but I am content. Parke and the Professor are waiting, Stacy," and she bent and kissed her with tears of joy shining in her lovely brown eyes.

LEE AND SHEPARD'S POPULAR FICTION

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POPULAR FICTION

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